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MYSTERIOUS MISS DACRES

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"Latitude 19°," etc.*

I.

"HAVE you a room for rent?" I looked up from the dish-towel which I was hemming. A bony young woman stood before me. She wore a plain gray skirt and jacket; strong shoes showed from beneath the binding of her dress; her hat, a plain black felt, was tied on and down with a veil, but in front a bang of curly yellow hair peeped and struggled through. She had a thin face and high cheek-bones, and a laughing, anxious eye,—a curious combination.

"Come up on the piazza," I said, "and sit down. How long do you want it for?"

She entered the gate and covered the few steps to the house. I noticed with what a quiet step she walked, and the thought flashed through my mind, "She at least will not disturb Aunt Jane Mary." She took the two broad steps upward with the same silent tread, and spoke in a low voice, now that we were close together.

"I cannot tell for how long," she said, answering my question. "I am here on a particular mission. That mission may be accomplished in a week, and it may take six months. Are you willing to let me have the room by the week?"

Now I had never said that I had a room for rent, but evidently she had heard somewhere in the neighborhood that I did let my lower rooms when I could do so at proper rates. It helped me on with Tom's college bills; and Aunt Jane Mary's electricity had to be paid for somehow.

"The room is on the ground floor, I suppose," said my visitor. "I am very much afraid of fire. I have had a very unpleasant experience. I wouldn't go upstairs if you would give me the solar system." She looked down as she said these words, and I was afraid she was going to burst out crying.

"Don't cry, my dear," I said,—“don't! Aunt Jane Mary might hear you, and then——”

"Oh, have you other people in the house? I did not know that. Then perhaps I had better say I will not take the room. I can't bear a noise nor——”

"Neither can Aunt Jane Mary," said I, hastening to change the impression that I had given her, for I really needed some income from that room. It had stood empty now for two months, and there was Tom's bill for his foot-ball suit already sent in, and I was expecting another dun every morning. Tom was a good lad, but I thought that sometimes he imagined that his mother was made of money.

"My aunt, who lives with me,"—really, I lived with Aunt Jane Mary, but that there was no necessity for explaining, and I thought that I should retain my visitor's respect more fully if I did not mention the fact,—“is quite an invalid.”

"Does she never come downstairs?" inquired my prospective boarder.

"She never leaves her room," said I. "The Doctor promises now that she may be able to get up by the last of August, but I hardly know——”

"Oh, that will be time enough for my purpose," said the girl with a short laugh. "I—I mean that I shall have accomplished what I came for, rest and change, in that time.”

"Perhaps you would like to look at the room?" I said.

"Yes," replied the young woman, moving towards the hall-door.

I laid my dish-towel down in the rocker, where I had been seated, and went into the house. I turned into the first room on the right. "This is it," I said.

She entered and surveyed the premises. The room was a corner one with windows on the veranda—two in front and two on the side,—a large, comfortable, old-fashioned bedchamber. The great mahogany bed, that had been my dear mother's, stood ready for the next tired occupant. It had only to be made up with the sweet-smelling old sheets that were laid away in the closet, the pillow-cases on top of them, with sprigs of lavender between.

"It's a lovely room," said my visitor. She opened the closet-doors,—without asking if she might, which I did not exactly like. It shocked my old-fashioned notions, for the room had not been taken by her yet.

"What nice, deep closets! And where does that door lead to?" She indicated a door near the outer wall on the side of the room.

"This room was once used for the dining-room," said I, "and those stairs go down to the cellar, but we have another small cellar, and with such light housekeeping as mine" (I sighed as I thought of dear Tom's appetite in the holidays, which was a blessing, even if I had to work hard to supply it) "we need no other, so this has been abandoned."

"I couldn't have people coming into my room to go down cellar," said she.

"Oh, certainly not," I answered. "If you take the room, it is yours, of course. No one uses the cellar—now."

She opened the door and descended the steps. I could not see what she wanted in that cellar, but thought, after all, it was natural that she should wish to know what was underneath the place where she might be going to sleep. "You needn't come down," she called upward. I could not hear her moving about; she was quiet in all her motions. After a few moments she reappeared.

"One of the windows is broken," she said, "but the hole is not large enough for anyone to crawl through."

"I will have it mended," said I meekly. I was sorry the moment that I had said this. It showed her how very much I wished to rent the room.

"Well," she said, "I don't know as that is really necessary. There is a good bolt on the door, I suppose."

"What door?" said I.

"The door opening on those stone steps leading up to the back yard." How closely she had observed everything!

"I hardly know," said I. "I haven't been down there in so long."

"Wait! I'll see," and before I knew what she intended, she had disappeared again into the darkness of the cellar and was lost from sight. I descended a few steps after her.

"Don't come down," she called back in her low, soft voice, "you fill up the door-way and cut off the light." Whereupon I retreated from my own cellar and from this masterful young woman.

I waited for a few moments, and then I heard the soft rustle of her skirt,—no, not a rustle, nothing about her rustled; it was simply a flap-flap of the front of her dress against the stairs as she came upward.

She held out her hands, showing me the palms of her gray gloves. They were stained a deep yellow. "There is a bolt," she said, "but it sticks so that I cannot move it. Could anyone break in from the outside, do you think? I should die of fright if I thought that some

man might burst the door down and come up those stairs, in the middle of the night, to this door. Has this a lock?—Oh, yes, I see, but it must have a bolt too. Will you have one put on? How much will it cost? Will you——”

“I do not care to go to any expense,” said I, “unless I am sure that you are coming to me. Those two bolts will be—— Is there anything else that you will want? How about the windows on the piazza?”

“Somehow I don’t mind those,” she said with a quick, smiling glance to me. “I always slept on the veranda at home——” She sighed.

“I have a little room upstairs,” said I, “which I—you are so quiet—you——”

“Yes, my profession requires me to be.”

“Your profession?”

“Yes,” she answered quickly. “I am a trained nurse. I have to come and go at all hours of the night and day. I should not want to be going up your stairs at night. And your Aunt——”

“Jane Mary——”

“Exactly. Your Aunt Jane Mary might object to it. I told you I am afraid of fire and——”

“You must often have to attend patients who are on third and fourth floors,” said I.

“Not if I can help it. Of course, I cannot always choose, but——”

“The ceilings are low,” said I. “You could easily drop from the veranda roof to the floor. My boy——” I sighed, I know, for she gave me a quick, sympathetic look.

“You have a boy, then? Ah, so have I, a little chap. He is at boarding-school. He little knows what straits his poor mother—but that is neither here nor there. In short, how much do you want for your room?” My heart warmed to this very young mother.

“Shall you want any meals?”

“No, I am so uncertain that I shall get my meals where I am. Just now, though, I might like my dinners here, as I have no engagements at present. Understand me, I can have any number, but I truly need a rest.” She looked so.

“Shall you want your washing done?”

“No, I will see to all that. Perhaps a few small things sometimes. I should like a good cup of coffee in the morning at eight o’clock, with a piece of toast or bread and an egg, and then my dinners at—what time do you dine?”

“I will suit you,” said I. “There is no one to consult. Aunt Jane Mary never comes down, and——”

A smile lighted up her features.

"I could not have found a place that would suit me better. How much, then?"

"Five dollars a week," said I slowly, watching her from under my lids.

At her pleased, acquiescent smile I saw that I might as well have asked ten.

"And no extras?" she said.

"Oh, that's only for the room," said I. "The breakfasts and dinners will come to five dollars more."

"Very well," she replied without demurring. "And now, that is really all, not another extra of any kind?—lights, fires, everything included? However, I don't suppose I shall want a light much, and I will arrange with your servant——"

"You had better tell me," said I, "and I will see——"

There was a silence, during which I saw that she was taking in the fact that all the service in the house was done by me, its mistress.

"And about the bolts?" she said. "But no!" seeing me demur at the extra expenditure,—“I will pay for those myself. There is no hurry, at least until after—— Very well, then, ten dollars a week, all told."

"When do you wish to come?"

"Now," said she, "at once!"

"Your trunks will come later, I suppose."

"Yes, I have my satchel with me, enough to get along with at present."

"Satchel?" I said, looking about on the veranda floor, for we had emerged from the room.

"Yes, it's out there by the gate, with my wheel. Do you mean to say you didn't see me ride up? There's the wheel, under that old elm-tree. Shall I bring the satchel in?"

Without waiting for answer, she ran down the steps, seized upon the satchel, and came through the gate, pushing the wheel awkwardly along, the satchel banging against her thin knees. It proved to be a dress-suit case, and was marked "J. A. D."

"It's a man's case," she said, "but I find it holds more than my bag. It's my brother's."

"Your brother's?" I said tentatively.

"Yes, but you needn't bother about Jamie. He's gone the way of his kind. I shall never see him on this earth again."

"How long was he ill?" I asked sympathetically.

She turned away and brushed her hand across her eyes with a boyish gesture.

"He wasn't ill at all. He went off in a moment, as it were. They

do sometimes. We none of us knew of it until it was too late to do anything. But there! I have talked enough for one day." She yawned politely behind her gloved hand. "How soon can I have the room? I'm dead tired."

"Will you sit on the veranda while I make it up?" said I. "The maid is——"

"Yes," said she, cutting into my explanation and saving me a black mark in the book of the Recording Angel, "but hurry, please, for I am really worn out."

As she seated herself, I saw that her shoes were very muddy,—not with wet mud, for the day was bright and sunny, but with mud that had been wet and had dried.

"You are looking at my shoes," she said, laughing as if she enjoyed the situation. "I had to walk some distance from my last engagement. It was the night before last. The man died, and there was nothing more for me to do. The roads were muddy, if you remember, and I had left my wheel at the lodge. They had no idea that he would die so soon, and, in fact, neither had I. Well, his troubles are over. But, do pardon me, and do get the bed ready for me, or I shall go to sleep out here."

She leaned back in my rocker, with her eyes closed, her yellow bang showing. She would have been a pretty woman if she had not been so thin. Her hair, which was coarse and curly, poked out beneath her veil.

I went into the room and opened the closet-door. I took down the sweet-smelling sheets and the pillow-cases. I removed the checked cover from the spread and blankets, and then I went to the window, the pillow between my teeth, the pillow-slip between my two hands. "Don't you think——" I began. The rocker was empty; there was no one there. I put my head out of the window to see where my new lodger had betaken herself to. There lay the dress-suit case, and there stood the wheel; then she had not vanished just as I had become easy about those base-ball bills. As I looked, she came round the corner of the house. She yawned again as she saw me, and said, "I am trying to keep awake until you get that everlasting room ready. I have been taking a survey of the premises. You seem to be pretty lonely out here."

"Oh, no!" I said. "This is the highroad. Lawyer Jennison's house is only half a mile farther on, and Farmer Barker, you know, is just a little way back, not more than a mile or so."

"Getting crowded!" said my new boarder with a laugh. "And whose is that large house that I see way off there on the hill. I suppose those great iron gates that I passed are at the entrance. It seems a fine place."

"Oh, that's the Darlington place. Don't you know about the Darlingtons?"

She turned and clutched the piazza rail. "I am so tired," she said; and really, I saw that she had grown pale under her coat of tan. "I will hurry," I said. "So you haven't heard about the Darlingtons?" Country people think that strangers must know all about their magnates.

"The Darlingtons? How should I know about the Darlingtons? What should I know about the Darlingtons? I know nothing about anyone here; I come from another county. All I know is,"—she burst out laughing and yawned again,—“all I know is that I must get to bed, or I shall sink down on the piazza floor.”

She flung herself into the rocker, and I retreated from the window to hasten the making of the bed. When it was ready I called to her softly from the open door, but she had really fallen asleep, and so I left her until I got fresh water and towels. Then I closed the window softly and went to her side. I rested my hand lightly on her shoulder. "Your room is ready," I said. She did not awake at once, and I gave her a gentle shake. She sprang to her feet and stood blinking at me, holding on to the chair for support.

"Jim!" she said. "Jim, is it you?"

Poor creature! My heart went out to her. Thinking of that dead brother. She had told me that he was just eighteen when he went away. Some people use that expression for the more solemn word, death.

"It is I, my dear, not Jim," I said. "Come with me; your room is ready."

She awoke fully at this, and stumbled up the step into the square hall and walked unsteadily towards the door of the room. I took up the dress-suit case and carried it within the room and set it down. Then I went outside and softly closed the blinds. There came a ring from Aunt Jane Mary's bell. I finished closing the blinds and went into the room again. My boarder was sleepily untying the knots in the muddy shoe-strings. I looked at the shoes distrustfully. "I wonder who will clean your shoes?" I said.

"I don't know," she murmured; "someone will have to. I will pay for it. Do help me, please; you have made this room so dark, I can't see anything. Oh,"—she fumbled in her pocket,—“I suppose you would like to be paid for the first week.”

"I never thought——"

"Here, take it, it's just as well," and she thrust some money into my hand without counting it. I reminded her of this.

"Do let me sleep," she exclaimed wearily. "No matter what it is. Easy come and easy go," and she had thrown herself upon the bed and was in the land of dreams before I had closed the door.

I had the muddy shoes in my hand as I went down the hall-way. I had taken them with me, for, so far as I could see, they were her only ones; but something else I had seen, and that was, that of the bills which she had thrust within my hand, one of these was of the denomination fifty, and another was numbered one hundred.

I was almost afraid to have so much money at once in my possession, and that belonging to another person. As I went to put the bills carefully in my desk, they fell upon the floor, and I saw that there were four, the third and fourth being numbered five and five respectively. "I will keep these small bills," I said to myself,—“it is exactly the amount I charge her for a week paid in advance,—and restore the rest.”

As I folded them to put them where my small savings were hidden away, I saw two dots or marks upon the very edge. Looking closer, I discovered that they were the letters "A. D."

"J. A. D.," said I to myself, remembering the initials on the dress-suit case. "Some relation, probably. I wonder if he marks all her bills." I looked at the others, and there in the corner of each were the letters "A. D." "I imagine I shall know a good deal more about my boarder than I do now before I finish with her," said I to myself; and I was not mistaken.

Just here Aunt Jane Mary's bell rang again, but for once I allowed it to ring, apparently unheard. I wrote a hurried list for the village store, went to the back hall window, called Baldy Towner from his wood-splitting, and sent him post-haste to the village. Then I took a half sheet, folded a five-dollar bill within it, wrote on the outside "From Mother," and addressed it to Tom, stamped the letter, called Baldy Towner back, and gave it to him; then I locked my desk and hurried across the hall to Aunt Jane Mary's room. I opened the door very quietly. I heard a whisking sound, and found that Aunt Jane Mary was panting and breathing uneasily as I entered. Had I not known that it was quite impossible for her to move or stand I should have thought that she had been getting up all by herself.

"It's such an exertion to reach that bell," said Aunt Jane Mary. "And how long you *do* take in coming. I thought I heard voices."

"You did, Aunt Jane Mary," said I, putting the hand-bell close to the edge of the table. "I've let the lower front."

"Without consulting me?" said Aunt Jane Mary.

"Why, Aunt Jane Mary, you know we've talked it over and talked it over, until I thought you were tired of the subject, and I let it the last time and you seemed pleased. Besides, I hadn't time."

"Hadn't time for what?"

"To consult you. If I hadn't clinched the bargain she would have thrown it up."

"Who would?"

"The boarder."

"What's her name?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said I wearily.

"What! Take a boarder and not know her name?"

"It does seem queer, now I think of it, but she has paid me for the room in advance."

"For how long?"

I might have said for nearly a twelvemonth, had I been so inclined, but I knew that Aunt Jane Mary would demand the care of the funds, so I said only:

"Oh, for a week. I am to give her her breakfast and dinner."

"How do you know she isn't walking off now with my mother's sheets and pillow-cases?"

I laughed aloud as I thought of the poor, tired, overworked nurse and her one pair of muddy shoes. I said:

"Because your mother's sheets and pillow-cases are upstairs in the little hall-closet. Those are my own, the ones she has,—those that the ladies at the Hall gave me when I went to housekeeping." I sighed.

"The clock, then."

"The clock is mine too."

"The Holy Bible with the card-board marker."

"All those things are mine, Aunt Jane Mary. That room is furnished with my own things. Poor creature! She doesn't want to walk off with anything. She's a trained nurse. She's tired out. She has just come from her last case. She is nearly dead. The man died——"

"What of?"

I sat down, stunned. "I never thought of that," I said.

Aunt Jane Mary held her hands out as if to ward me off. "Go! go!" she said. "Out of my sight! Out of my presence! Go, and fumigate yourself, and when you are sure that you can bring me no infection, come back to me and tell me the rest."

As I arose to leave the room, I cast a backward glance at the helpless occupant of the old-fashioned bed. Aunt Jane Mary was a very stout old lady. She had her head shaved and wore a black cap and a false front. She tied the ends in front in rabbit's ears. She wore a flowered sacque with large ruffles. She was not pretty, but she was my mother's sister, and the house was hers, and I had nowhere else to go. She needed a great deal of waiting on, and she scolded me unpleasantly sometimes, but if I left her, where would Tom come for his holidays?—my dear boy Tom! And I must say right here that she allowed me to take half of all sums coming in from the boarders

in consideration of my doing all the work. She needed an immense amount of waiting on, on account of her rheumatic gout, but there could be no question of my declining the service. She was helpless and she gave me a home.

I ran down the stairs as swiftly as possible. I could not believe that J. A. D. would have brought infection to us, certainly not willingly. Her profession of nurse must have taught her to be careful, and she had, I was sure, come from nothing worse than a sudden death from heart failure or something similar.

I went out to the veranda and resumed my discarded hemming. I had not sat there many minutes when I saw a man coming along the road leading out from Galtersville. He was on a wheel, and, as J. A. D. had done, he stopped at my door and jumped lightly to the ground. He leaned the wheel against a tree and opened the gate. There was no click to the latch, and in coming towards me he walked on the grass, which angered me a little, as I hated to have a path made in my small lawn. He came and stood at the foot of the steps and looked up at me with a pleasant pair of brown eyes. He wore whiskers and mustache. He was a man of about thirty-five, strong and stocky, but with the lightest, deftest movements I ever saw in anyone. He had on knee-breeches and an old gray coat, very much worn. From his lower pockets protruded several papers, and from his breast-pocket stuck up the rubber head of a pencil. I knew at once that he was a newspaper man. I wondered if he had come to ask questions about the great family on the hill. If he had, he might as well go away again; my lips would be sealed forever on that subject. It was too dear a one to me, too near and too dear. I saw that he was speaking, but our great dog, Bill, was barking at the stranger, and I could not hear what he said.

"Be quiet, Bill!" said I, giving the great creature a perfectly useless push with my knee. "What did you say?"

"I heard in the town that I could get a room out here."

"It's a good way from the city," said I.

"Oh, that's nothing. I can take the trains and leave my bike at the station when I go in. Have you a vacant room?"

"Yes," said I, "but I don't know that it will suit you."

"Let me see it." As he said these words he came up the steps, his rubber shoes making no noise. I thought I heard the blinds of the lower front rattle, but it must have been my fancy, for the girl was sound asleep, I felt sure. I went in at the front door, and looked around to see if he was following. Yes, there he was, right behind me.

Now, back of the room which I had just rented to J. A. D. was another room, somewhat smaller, it is true, but very comfortable

withal. Its back window looked out upon the wood-shed and chicken-coop; its side window upon the veranda.

"Have you other boarders in the house?" he asked me, after a cursory survey of the room.

I hesitated.

"I see you have," he said in his soft voice. "Very well, then, it won't do for me. I detest a racket."

"Well," I acknowledged haltingly, "I have one boarder."

"I may as well go," said the stranger; "some noisy fellow, I suppose, who——"

"I should not let my room to a noisy fellow," said I. "It is a young woman. She came only this afternoon. She is lying down in there."

"In where?"

"In there, in that room," said I, pointing to a door which made the rooms communicating ones.

"Never do in the world! What's her name?" The softness of his voice robbed the words of their bluntness.

"I do not know."

"What! Not know the name of your own boarder?"

It sounded so like Aunt Jane Mary that I could but smile.

"No, I don't know her name," said I. "She came up here a while ago, tired out, poor thing, and I didn't ask her name. Her initials—at least of her dress-suit case—are J. A. D."

"J. A. D.," said he, "J. A. D. Well, that doesn't tell me anything. Some gabbling girl, I suppose! She'll have half the village here in the early evenings, on the side veranda, when I am trying to sleep. And she's certain to have them in the daytime. I work hard and late at the office of the *Star Union*, and I must have my sleep."

"Then you are a newspaper man?" I said.

"What else?" said he.

Of course I knew it. I don't know why I asked. William was a reporter when I married him. I knew the signs but too well.

"Did—did—you come with any particular object about the—the family on the—the hill, because if you did——" He started. There! What a fool I always was. Why couldn't I have kept quiet? putting him on a scent which I was only too anxious *not* to have talked about.

"The family on the hill? and who, pray, are the family on the hill?"

Then he didn't know.

"And who, pray, are the family on the hill?" he repeated.

"Oh, then you don't know? The Darlingsons. I thought perhaps since the Squire has just died, and the papers want so much to get at the news of his will, and where he left his property, that——"

The stranger laughed very merrily.

"Hush!" said I, putting up my hand; "she is asleep."

"Who? Oh, the girl! Oh, no, no!" he said, smiling broadly and shaking his head. "You mistake me entirely. I get my living by much more difficult ways than writing scandals and society news. I do hard, legitimate work for my daily bread, but I see I may as well be going on. If I can't have a quiet place, there is no use——"

"Don't you call this room a quiet one?" asked I.

"Well, possibly. But that girl in there's an uncertain quantity. How long is she going to stay?"

"I don't know," said I.

"Doesn't she?"

"That I can't tell you, and she must stay her week out; besides, why should I turn her out to please you?"

She had paid me in advance, but I considered that none of his business.

"Are you sure she's quiet?"

"That's just what she asked about the house. I wouldn't dare take anyone who wasn't equally so. She came first, you know."

"Yes, I know she did," said he, smiling.

"I should—have to—to ask some sort of reference," said I hesitatingly. "You know I am alone here, with my invalid aunt. We are far from the next farms, and I must know whom I take into the house."

"Why, certainly," said the stranger. "You are perfectly reasonable in that. I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I won't come to-day, but I'll come out to-morrow, at about this hour, and you'll have time to send the lady away. You say she has paid for a week in advance" (I had not said so), "but I really don't see why that should stand in your way. You could return it. How much do you charge her?"

"I don't see that that's any——"

"Of my business? Right. So it isn't! Now I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'll go back to town, and do my night work, and bring a testimonial from my employer, the editor of the paper, and the manager too, if you like, and I'll agree to pay twenty dollars a week for the room and board, if you'll let the young woman go."

I had never let the room for anything like that sum. It was a back room and much smaller than the one occupied by J. A. D. At once it seemed to me that I had let her have hers too cheaply, and I sighed, and decided to raise the price the following week.

"I couldn't turn her out," I said. "She is so tired,—almost ill, I think. I really couldn't."

"Well," said the stranger, "perhaps I had better try it for a week. If she's noisy, I shall go myself." He deposited a pad and several

pencils on the table and divested his pocket of papers, among which were the morning and evening editions of the *Star Union*. He saw me looking at the paper and picked it up, holding it towards me and pointing with an inky forefinger to a column on agriculture. He ran his finger rapidly down the page to the signature, "Henry Mallard."

"Here," he said with pride in his tones.

"Where?" said I.

"There, that's me, my nom de plume. I wrote that." He looked at the printed name with a conceited air. He ceased the contemplation of the mystic words suddenly and turned quickly to me.

"This room seems cold," said he.

"That's because there's a cellar underneath it," said I. "It will soon warm up with a fire."

"A cellar!" he exclaimed quickly. "How do you get to it?"

"From the lady's room," said I.

He laughed. "That's capital," he said.

"Capital?" said I.

"Yes, capital—that it doesn't open out of mine. I hope she'll see her company down there. Very well, then, off I go. You'll see me back at this time to-morrow with a pile of credentials that high." He measured a foot of space between his hands, walked quietly along the matting-covered hall, went out of the door and down the steps, retraced his way over the grass, mounted his wheel, and was gone. As I came back into the front hall, the new boarder was standing in her door-way.

"I heard voices," said she. "Where were they?"

"It—it must have been in the back room," said I.

"What back room?"

"The room back of this."

"Is that where that door leads to?"

"Yes," said I shamefacedly.

"You never told me there was a room back of this. Have you any other boarders? I thought that I was the only one."

"Really," said I falteringly, "I do not think that you should expect me not to let my rooms when I can. They have stood unoccupied so long, I must let them when possible——"

"Oh, have you only just let it? Was it when I was asleep?"

"Yes," said I. "The stranger came just after you lay down. He likes the room, and I shall have to let him have it. He will pay me well; really, he pays more than you do, and I cannot afford to lose him."

"What does he look like?"

"Oh, he's pleasant-faced."

"Clean shaven?"

"No," said I. "He has whiskers and a mustache."

"I hate a man with whiskers," she exclaimed. "What is his name?" The same question that he had asked me about her.

"I really don't know," said I. "He is coming back with his credentials to-morrow."

"And you take a boarder, an utter stranger, into your house without even asking his name. He might murder me all alone down here."

"I forgot," said I; "but you forget that I do not know yours."

The girl's face flushed.

"No," she said, "you do not. Well then, Jo—Josephine Dacres. I ought to have told you before. But I'm a woman. This is a man—among lone women—in the room next to this."

"He's a harmless newspaper man," said I.

"And I'm a helpless woman."

I glanced at the dressing-case. "J. A. D.," said I. "What does 'A.' stand for?"

"I can't see that that makes any difference."

"No, it makes no difference at all, only I can't see why——"

"Why I shouldn't tell you my whole name? Well, I don't suppose there is any reason exactly. It's—it's Amaranthe."

"Amaranthe?" I exclaimed,—"Amaranthe?"

"Yes, why not?"

"Nothing," said I. "I've heard the name before, that's all. It's a singular name, one you do not often hear."

"Yes," said she, "an odd name. I don't think that I ever knew another person who was named 'Amaranthe.'" She put her hand to her head with a weary gesture. "I declare I get so tired sometimes that I almost forget who I am. Yes, I am Josephine Amaranthe Dacres. I ought to have told you when I first came, I suppose. Well, good-by, I'm going." She picked up the dress-suit case from the floor.

"Going! Going where?" said I, aghast, partly because I hated to think that I was to lose my boarder, and partly because the money paid in advance had part of it been sent to Tom, and part of it by our old factotum, Baldy Towner, to the store for flour, potatoes, sugar and butter, coffee, tea, and such like necessities. Our credit was not particularly good in those days.

"Don't go," I said. "Don't, don't! I don't believe he'll bother you at all. It is likely that you will never even see him. He hated the idea of your being here as much as you hate the idea of his being here. He wants quiet too."

"It's an awfully comfortable bed," said the girl, with a succession

of yawns. "Well, if you promise me he won't have men in there, drinking and carousing, I'll stay my week out anyway. I wish I had some slippers. I must send for my—no, I won't; I won't send for anything until I've seen that man and found how he's going to behave. When can I see him without his seeing me?"

"He said he'd come out to-morrow morning," said I. "He's very inoffensive, I'm certain. All he wants is peace and quiet, and I'm sure if you both want it, you're sure to get it." Just here there was a thumping on the floor overhead from Aunt Jane Mary's cane. My boarder jumped and looked over her shoulder.

"What is that?" she gasped.

"Only my invalid aunt. She thumps for me in that way."

"Well, don't let her do it again," she said sharply. "Tell her, please, my nerves won't stand it."

"She was very anxious to know," said I, "whom you had nursed last."

"Whom I had nursed?"

"Yes, the dead man, don't you know? She'll ask me again as soon as I go up."

"The dead man?" she repeated, looking at me nervously.

"Why, the man you told me you came from, through the mud——"

"I never told you anything of the—oh, yes! I know now what you mean. The man who was taken suddenly. Yes. Oh, no, he had nothing contagious,—nothing catching, I assure you. He just died, tell your poor aunt, from want of breath, absolutely from want of breath,—nothing else. Tell your aunt so, but tell her also, please, that I cannot stand sudden noises. I have been worn out with my profession, and no one needs rest more than I do."

She went to the window giving on the side piazza and opened it, and stood there leaning out and drinking in the fresh April air.

"Shall I close the door?" I asked.

There was no answer. I approached her softly and laid my hand on her shoulder. "Shall I?"

"How dare you?" She turned furiously, shaking all over. Her face and lips were colorless. "How dare you, or—or—at least, you make me start. Don't do that again. I am very, very nervous. Can't you see how nervous I am?—on the very verge of nervous prostration. We must have an understanding." Here Aunt Jane Mary thumped again. "Run! run quickly and tell her to stop it. At once, do you hear?"

"You little know my Aunt Jane Mary," began I.

"And I hope I shall know her less," said she. "There is just this about it. Even if the man does not prove disagreeable when I see him, I shall not remain a moment if that racket overhead is to con-

tinue. Tell her so, if you please." And I ran up the stairs wondering what I should do about the five-dollar bill which Baldy Towner was probably changing at that moment over the counter of the country store, not to mention the other five which was in his pocket in the letter on the way to my dear boy Tom.

II.

I GAVE the young woman her early dinner, and then left her to rest for the afternoon. I had little time to spare for strangers, and so long as I gave her what I had bargained to give, I felt that I could not be expected to do more. When Baldy Towner returned from the store, I set him to work cleaning the shoes that I had brought out from the lower front. He was not over-pleasant about it, but I saw that there might be much of it to do, so I was firm, in the very first instance. I said:

"Baldy Towner, you need not look so unpleasant. Those are the shoes of my boarder who came to-day. She evidently roams about the country a good deal, and doubtless her boots will often be muddy, perhaps worse than they are to-day. They must be cleaned, and——"

"Why sh'd I do it?" returned Baldy Towner crossly.

I might have returned, "And why should I?" but I said, "Who else is there to do it?—Miss Jane Mary?"

The humor of the second part of my sentence seemed to strike Baldy Towner as a huge joke. He really laughed for the third time that year.

I did not smile, however. I put on my most severe expression. "I have enough to do," said I, "without cleaning shoes. I am sure the Judge never anticipa——"

"I don't s'pose he did," said Baldy Towner. "Then why didn't the Jedge leave ye more wealthy off?"

"That's enough, Baldwin Towner," said I. "I'm tired, and worried, and——"

"So be I. But I'll clean them shoes, if ye say so, Miss Brathwaite."

"Thank you, Baldy Towner," said I, and fled incontinently, for fear that he might change his mind.

I gave the young woman her tea in the dining-room across the hall. She seemed very well pleased with the young chicken and the nice rhubarb sauce, the rhubarb for which I had cut from the kitchen garden. I was low in my mind about that young chicken, but I had forgotten meat for tea when I sent Baldy Towner away so hurriedly, and that chicken had to be sacrificed. Well, I had sacrificed more in my life than one little pullet, and probably I should be called upon to make much greater sacrifices.

My guest was retiring early. I heard her bolt her door by half after

eight o'clock, and I, weary with my day's work, went upstairs to my room over the parlor. Aunt Jane Mary rang her bell just as I had closed my door,—her room was across the hall from mine,—and I went to her, though I could hardly drag one foot after another, and after I had attended to her wants, which took nearly an hour and a half,—giving electricity is tiresome work,—I went back to my room. I put out my light and lay down, but I could not sleep. The moonlight streamed full in on my face. I hid my eyes in the pillow; I pulled the sheet up over my nose. There was no use in trying; I must get up, tired as I was, and close the blinds. I raised the window very softly so as not to awake Aunt Jane Mary. I stretched out my hand for the hasp of the blind, when I thought that I heard the sound of voices.

Yes, it was true. Standing under the great elm in front of the gate were two figures. As near as I could make out, they were those of a man and a woman. I strained my ears to hear what they were saying, for I could not understand why anyone should choose the shelter of our old elm as a meeting-place. Could it be Baldy Towner? Perhaps his wife, Glorianna, had come over from Waukegan Town to try to persuade him to return. Baldy was very stubborn, and Glorianna had not behaved any too well, and Baldy Towner had said to me only the day before, "I wunt, I wunt, I wunt g' back. She can write, and send, and even come. I know when I'm well off. I shouldn't be well offer there, and though I'm kinder poor off here in some ways, I'd be poor offer ef I's to g' back and let her lick me ag'in."

Baldy Towner stood six feet two in his stockings, and Glorianna was a slim little creature. I despised his weak resolve! What Glorianna really needed was what Aunt Jane Mary called a "special good trouncing" from Baldy Towner and an assertion on his part as to who was the head of the family, but it was not to my interest to say so. I could not get along without him. My heart sank within me as I heard the murmur, and I wondered if she would really persuade him to go back to her and Waukegan Town and his beatings.

I crouched in the window, listening, but though I strained my ears to the aching point, I caught no distinct word. Finally the man stooped and put his hands on the woman's shoulders. He kissed her. Oh, dear! Then the reconciliation was complete. He would leave me on the morrow. What should I do, with the marketing to attend to, the cooking to do, the beds to make, the house to keep clean, not to speak of the shoes!—the muddy shoes!

"Good-night." I did hear that much, and then, instead of the woman going away, it was, to my great surprise, the man, who drew towards him a wheel, which had been leaning against the tree in the shadow. "I'll be over in the morning," I heard him say. "All right,"

answered the woman's voice, and she turned and opened my own gate, and came along up the gravel-path,—no, not the path, she walked on the grass.

Of course, I knew now who it was, and why she walked on the grass. Naturally she did not wish anyone to know of her midnight assignation. Well, I would see that she had no more of them. My house, Aunt Jane Mary's rather, should not be used as a rendezvous for such creatures as she. I would tell her so in the morning. I would give her warning. Of course, she must eat up and sleep out her ten dollars' worth, but as soon as that debt was paid she should leave the house and never set foot inside it again. I listened and heard her come in at the front door, lock it softly, and go into her own room. If she shot the bolt of her door, it was unheard by me. Well, no matter. She should have warning before breakfast.

I spent a restless night. My room was opposite Aunt Jane Mary's, over the parlor and across the hall from my Lower-Front's bedchamber. I wondered if Aunt Jane Mary had heard the movement in the house. However, I was almost certain that she had not, or I should have been called by the tinkle of the bell. I was now hopelessly awake, and lay tossing in my bed, furious with myself, my boarder, and everyone else—more angry than anything with the fact that I should need all the rest that I could obtain to spur me up to the stand that I was to take in the morning. I dropped asleep a little before daylight, and on awaking found that I was a half-hour late. Oh, dear, there was so much to do! Where should I begin? I dressed hastily and ran down the stairs.

My boarder was evidently up, for her door was open, her bedclothes thrown back, and the room airing in a manner to suit the most particular of housekeepers. This somewhat mollified me towards her, but still I was determined that she should go, and that I would tell her so as soon as I had the time. She nodded to me as I looked out of the door, for she sat there, calmly rocking in my chair, looking unblushingly at the morning sun as it rose over Farmer Barker's hickory-nut wood. She had on her feet a loose pair of slippers. Her shoes, well cleaned, were standing within the door of her room.

"I thought you hadn't any slippers?" said I.

"Good-morning," said Miss Dacres politely. This made me conscious at once of my own rudeness.

"Good-morning," said I. "Excuse my remark, but you know you told me yesterday——"

"Yes, so I did. Well, I've got them since, I——"

"I have no time to talk now," said I, "but please to understand that when your breakfast is eaten, I shall be glad to see you in the parlor."

"You are very kind," returned Miss Dacres, in the tone one uses when accepting an agreeable invitation. "I will come with pleasure. I never sew, you know, I am only here for a rest."

"You need not sew," said I, "and you need not remain long."

"What?" said she. "I don't understand your tone. I——"

I ran down the steps and round into the back yard.

"Baldy Towner," said I, wishing to make sure before I went any further, though I certainly did hear her come into the house, "have you and Glorianna made up?"

"Nor never will in this blessed world," said Baldy Towner.

"Is the fire made?" said I, running towards the hen-roost.

"It be," called Baldy Towner after me, as he went to the well for water.

I found three or four fine eggs, went back into the kitchen, prepared Miss Dacres's breakfast, and called her into the dining-room.

I waited on her in silence, and then left the room, asking her to ring when she wanted anything else.

She did not seem blessed with a large appetite. Indeed, in looking at her, it seemed to me that she must be very delicate. There were large black circles round her blue eyes, and her face appeared even more sallow than it had on the last evening. Now that she had discarded her felt hat, I saw that all of her hair was short, thick, and curly.

"I see you are looking at my hair," said she to me when I came in, bringing her a glass of cold water, which Baldy Towner had just drawn from the well. "I wear it so because it is easier for me, and much neater in my profession. I am always dressed. I just run a comb through it and shake it out. First, though, I stick it in a bucket of water."

"It looks just like a boy's," said I.

"Yes, that's what they all say. I've often wished that I had been born a man. They have the dead wood on us, don't you think so?"

"The——" My tone was interrogative.

"Dead wood, the dead wood. Oh, you don't understand! I catch all sorts of slang from my brothers; you can't help it when you're the only girl. You see, when a patient calls me, my hair is always neat and tidy, or I can make it so in the jerk of a ram's tail—I mean, in the small space of a minute, and then I don't waste any time with curl papers, and——"

"If you have finished your breakfast," said I, "I should like to see you in the parlor."

"Don't keep me long," said Miss Dacres. "I haven't any sewing, and I don't talk gossip. I'm very busy writing a treatise on the best method to nurse typhoid. I hold that——"

"Do you know anything about rheumatic cramps?" asked I.

"Well, I should smile, rather—I mean, of course I do. Rheumatic cramps are my specialty. Why, have you got 'em?"

"No," said I, "I have not, but my aunt—however, that is neither here nor there. What I have to say to you will preclude the possibility of—but come into the parlor," and I led the way to the room in front of the dining-room. I opened the door and groped my way across the room by the light that came from the hall. I threw up the window and pushed open the blind.

"Smells stuffy, don't it?" remarked Miss Dacres.

"That's because it hasn't been opened for some weeks. My aunt is a confirmed invalid, and I have too much to do to sit in the parlor and play lady. When I have any sewing to do, I take it out on to the piazza, and there I—— Sit down," said I, suddenly breaking off.

The invitation was superfluous, as Miss Dacres had seated herself wearily in the best stuffed rocker, and had laid her head back against the clean tidy. However, what she had told me about her hair made me easy in my mind as to that. I saw as I looked at her that her eyes were closed, and I really thought she would drop off to sleep.

"Are you so tired," said I, "that you cannot listen to me for a moment?"

"I don't know what's the matter with me," she answered. "I never was so tired in all my life. I'm awfully nervous. I suppose that last case wore me out. He wouldn't have anybody but me,—took a fancy to me, I suppose. It's real sad after you've nursed a person for weeks to see him die. You get so kind of attached—gracious! how I worked over that old man."

"Did—did he leave you anything for all that nursing?" asked I, forgetting for the moment the object of our coming to the parlor.

"No," she said, "he didn't,—nothing but some pretty bad thoughts. It's those I'm trying to get rid of here, and I hope you won't allude to the subject until I'm stronger. I'll tell you all about it later. Perhaps in a few weeks I shall feel equal to the strain. I——"

"I'm afraid you and I shall part company before a few weeks are over," said I; "in fact, that is what I asked you to come in here about this morning."

I saw the dull color creep up under her pallid skin as I said these words. Her eyelids trembled, and I felt almost sorry for her.

"Will you tell me why?" she asked in a low voice. "Tell me at once, please. Have you heard—have I done anything? You said yesterday that I might come. It seemed such a rest to me, such an ideal home, and now you want to——" She had proceeded thus far with almost passion in her voice, now she dropped back to her old, quiet tone, saying, "Give me your reasons."

"I saw your meeting last night."

She sat up, opened her eyes, and laughed. "Oh, is that all? My meeting with Waldemar. That wasn't anything. Why, he's my brother. He's employed in an automobile factory, Waldemar. Mother sent out my slippers by him. She knew how careless I am, and——"

"How did he make himself known to you?" said I severely. "How did he know where you were?"

"Well, as to that, I could as well make my whereabouts known to my own brother as to anyone else, I suppose. We rode out here last week on our wheels, Waldemar and I. He can't get out until the day class in learning have got through. So we generally go out in the evening about six o'clock. We rode past your house, and I told Waldemar that if I went into the country to stay, it should be here. I told him, too, that I was coming out yesterday to see if you could take me in, and if I wasn't back at tea time, to ask mother to send out my slippers. They're awfully good to me, mother and Waldemar, and Jim was until he—he—went away." The girl's face flushed, her eyes grew moist, and I began to repent me somewhat of my suspicions. "However," she resumed, "since you seem to have these suspicions of me, and as my trunks have not come, I suppose I had better go. Perhaps I can find some place farther out in the country. Oh, dear! It's awfully hard, just as the apple-blossoms are coming on. I see you've got lots of 'em in the side yard. Well, there is not much to pack, and I'll——"

"I don't want to turn you out," said I. "Certainly you must stay until I have worked out your week's board."

"Oh, no," said she, "I don't think that at all. Perhaps you had better give me back the amount that I have paid for my meals, but rooms are always paid for in advance, I believe, and I must lose that, I suppose. I can ill afford to." She sighed.

"You can stay your week out," said I. Where was I to get the five dollars that she had paid me for her meals? Perhaps when the other newer boarder came, I might get it from him in advance, and pay her and let her go, but it seemed as if the question must be settled, now we had begun to argue it out. Why had I not had a little more prudence, a little more forethought? Had I waited a few hours, the Lower-Back would have arrived, and out of his advance payment I could have reimbursed her for what I had taken.

"If I were sure he was your brother," said I.

"What if he isn't? We didn't do anything wrong, did we? I just talked with him about fifteen minutes in front of your gate in the bright moonlight. But it was Waldemar. That I'll swear. I've half a mind to ask you to go in town and see mother to-day, since you are so suspicious; but no, I won't. I feel really insulted that you should

suspect me so. A poor tired nurse, who is worn out in taking care of sick people; and I think I'll go, anyway."

"Very well," said I, "perhaps it is better, but before you go, please wait a moment to see me. You know you gave me last night four bills, two fives, one one-hundred note, and a fifty-dollar bill. Did you know it?"

"Oh, yes," said she. "Of course I did. See how I trusted you, and you are suspicious of me just because my brother comes out from town with a pair of old slippers for me. Well, I'll go and pack, and when I'm ready I'll whistle up the stairs."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed I, "not for worlds! My aunt would be horrified. Please just sit quietly here in the hall, while I go and get it."

I intended asking Aunt Jane Mary for the extra five dollars. Shame compels me to confess that I intended to let my boarder lose the money paid in advance for the room. I could do nothing else. Such are the pleasures of adversity.

"I may as well be packing," said she. "The truth is, I thought the money would be safer with you than with me sleeping on the lower floor, and all——"

I was upstairs before she had finished her sentence and in my room. I took the keys from my pocket and fitted them in the lock. It stuck for a moment,—it never had before,—and I pushed it rather roughly. I turned the key with such force that it broke off in the lock.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What shall I do?" I cried.

"What's the matter, Sophronia?" It was Aunt Jane Mary's voice. My door was open and so was hers.

"I've broken the key off in the lock of my desk."

I ran across the hall as I said these words.

"I don't know of anything that is more exactly like you," was Aunt Jane Mary's kindly comment. "Well, what's in the desk?"

"The market-book and the money."

"What money?"

"The money the new boarder gave me to keep for her."

"Well, can't you keep it as well with the key broken off as with it whole? I should think it was safer so than the other way."

"Yes, it is," I faltered, "but she wants it."

"What for?"

"She's going."

"What! The new boarder going? The boarder who only came yesterday! What have you done to her, Sophronia?"

"I haven't done anything," said I, half crying,—“at least I've done everything. I've been as kind as kind could be, but I leave it

to you, Aunt Jane Mary, if we can harbor a person in the house who gets up at all hours of the night to see men, and who——”

“It was my brother.” The voice came from the door-way.

Aunt Jane Mary gave a scream. She hated to be caught looking as she did at that moment.

“Go downstairs,” said I. “Go down! Go downstairs, she’ll have a fit.”

“I’ll cure her,” said the boarder.

Aunt Jane Mary’s jaw was working convulsively. The new boarder approached the bed.

“There! There!” she said soothingly. She took Aunt Jane Mary’s hand in one of hers and smoothed it with the other. I have thought since that she must have possessed hypnotic power. “I’ve seen worse looking people than you in my profession,—not much, though,” she said, turning to me. “Now, now. There! There! There!” She stroked Aunt Jane Mary’s arm with her thin brown hand as she spoke. “There! You’ll be all right presently. There! Are you feeling better? Run down to my room,”—she turned to me,—“and open that little black bag that sets on the table, and bring me that bottle of pale yellow liquid. Get a tumbler and spoon as you come past the dining-room and some water. Oh! You have water here. Go quickly! There! There! Where is the pain?”

Aunt Jane Mary, who loved to be made much of, lay as quiet as a mouse.

Instinctively I obeyed, and running swiftly down the stairs, I got the bottle, spoon, and glass, and returned to the upper chamber. As I came in the door, Miss Dacres was lifting Aunt Jane Mary up on her pillows with the tenderness required by a serious case. Then she resumed the stroking of her arm, with the soothing “There! There!” which seemed a part of her trade. To my astonishment, Aunt Jane Mary allowed her to drop a few globules of the pale yellow liquid in a glass half-full of water and give it to her. Then the soothing in the way of stroking and words continued, and Aunt Jane Mary had soon dropped off into a natural slumber.

Miss Dacres gently disengaged herself and went quietly down the stairs. I followed slowly after.

“You can’t go until afternoon,” said I; “the key’s broken off in the lock, and I can’t get at your money.”

“Can’t some one round here pick a lock?”

“I’m afraid not,” said I. “There is no one nearer than the village. I am going down there by and by, and I will get the locksmith to come up.”

“I’ll go down on my wheel,” said she.

“No,” said I, suspecting something, I knew not what, from her

readiness, "I will go myself. You don't know where the locksmith lives, and I want——"

"I could ask, I suppose. The place isn't so all-fired big—I mean, the village is not a place of such magnificent distances—that——"

"No," said I, "but I wish to see the people at the store, and get some stamps at the post-office, and I may as well see to it myself."

"Very well," said she, turning away stiffly into her room. "Perhaps, after all, as you're the one to be benefited you had better do the walking."

This was so entirely what I should have to do that I smiled faintly. I looked in at her door, and saw that the work was yet for me to do.

"I must make that bed first, I suppose," said I, with a sigh.

"Oh, no, you needn't; I'll make the bed; just as lief as not. Besides, as I am going, and you'll have to put on clean sheets for the next comer, perhaps I'd better leave it as it is."

"I can't bear to think of it," said I. "I never left a room like that after nine o'clock in the morning."

"Your rooms don't get much airing that way, do they?" said she. This gave me something to think of.

"Just go along and don't bother," she added. "I'll make the bed." And I went.

When I had walked about a quarter of a mile I suddenly remembered my sunshade, which I wanted mended at the village store. I turned about and walked quickly backward. As I went swiftly towards the house, I raised my eyes to the window of my room. A woman was standing there, examining something which she held in her hands. What it was I could not tell. I came towards the house as fast as I could, and as soon as I got near the gate I raised my eyes again, but there was no one in my room, at least not at the window. When I came up the steps I found that Miss Dacres's room-door was closed. I opened it unceremoniously. There she was, pulling and stretching the sheets, patting them in place,—in fact, going through with all the motions of making a bed in the most approved manner.

"Who was that up in my room just now?" said I.

"How do I know?" she answered shortly.

"Were you up there?"

Miss Dacres stopped her bedmaking and stood upright. "I declare!" said she. "I think you are the most suspicious person I ever saw. I'm glad I'm going. Why should I go into your room? What should I get there? Not much, I should think, from——" She stopped short. She meant, I think, from my appearance. "You needn't flush up so. You've insulted me more than a thousand times since I came into this house, and as soon as I get my money I'm going out of here, if I have to walk back to town."

"Haven't you been upstairs?" asked I again, scrutinizing her narrowly.

"Yes," she admitted, "I have been upstairs, but it was only to see how your aunt is getting on. She wanted some breakfast, and I'm getting it for her."

"And you were not in my room?"

"No! No! No!" said she, "and no again. What should I want but my own money, and that, apparently, I can't get. Why shouldn't I be suspicious of you? It's probably that woman out there in the kitchen."

"What woman?"

"You'd better ask her. How do I know?" With this short answer Miss Dacres returned to her bedmaking, and I went up the stairs. All was apparently as I had left it. The key was still in the lock, still broken off, still stuck so that it could not be moved one way or the other. Aunt Jane Mary was sleeping as if she were dead. So I descended rapidly and ran out to the kitchen. Glorianna Towner was sitting by the stove. She was holding in her hand a spoon, with which she occasionally stirred the something which was heating in a pan.

"What are you doing, Glorianna?" asked I.

"A-stirring the posset," said she, without looking up.

"So I see. What were you doing in my room just now?"

"Declare to God I hain't——"

"Stop," said I, "we don't use such language here. Answer me without prevarication. What were you doing in my room?"

"Only come jess as you left the gate,—come across the back pasture," said Glorianna. "Hain't done a thing but set here an' stir as she told me to. She was a-comin' downstairs as I come in the back-hall door."

"Who?"

"That stranger. Said she'd be'n up to see yer aunt. She got the things outen the clawset, an' set me to stir this mess."

"Have you seen Baldwin?" I asked.

"Should think so," said Glorianna, a smile breaking out over her sharp features. She glanced towards the corner. There across a chair hung a cowhide. It looked useless enough, at present, but I could imagine its possibilities in the hands of the wiry little woman.

"How long are you going to remain?"

"Tell Baldy comes home 'long er me."

I sank down into a chair, hopeless. Then I must either harbor this little fiend of a person or lose Baldy Towner, my prop and stay.

"I haven't any room for you, Glorianna," said I.

"Don't make no diffrence. We'se got a good one to hum. You

can hev us both, or ye can lose us both. I reckon whar Baldy lives is good enough fer me."

"I will have no scandal," said I, "and if you stay you will have to work for your board."

"Ye don't want to hire me then?"

"No," said I. "I can't afford to do that. But if you wish to stay for a week or until I get rid of an unpleasant complication, you may. Come now, Glorianna, do relieve my mind, and tell me that it was you up in my bedchamber."

"Hain't left this blessed seat sence I come in here," declared Glorianna.

"Then who could it have been?"

"Yer aunt, pro'bly."

"My aunt! You know well enough, Glorianna, that my aunt cannot move from her bed. Everything that is done for my aunt I have to do." A bright thought struck me. "Now, why shouldn't you take some of the care of my aunt off my shoulders while you stay?"

"Guess she wouldn't hev me," replied Glorianna; "but I'll see about it when I've done a-stirrin' of this mess."

"There's one thing I won't have in this house," said I, looking at the cowhide, "and that's——"

"Lor'," said Glorianna, following my eyes with hers,—“he likes it."

"Do you, Baldwin?" said I. He was peeping in at the door.

"Pshaw," said he, "she can't hurt a fly."

"We'll see," said Glorianna, still stirring.

"Haven't you the spunk of a flea?" said I, starting up in a rage. "Baldwin, why don't you have her bound over to keep the peace?"

"Pshaw, she don't hurt none. I jess as li'ves she'd amuse herself's naut."

"Do you know who was up in my room just now, Baldwin?"

His wife gave him a quick glance, whether of caution or threat I could not decide.

"How sh'd I know? I've be'n a-splittin' wood ever sence I got up."

"Baldwin," said I, "I must now go to town. See to things until I get back, will you?" And again I started with the broken parasol and walked quickly on my way. When I got nearly into the village, I saw a man coming towards me on a bicycle. As he neared me, he slowed his wheel and jumped off.

"Here are the certificates," he said. I saw that it was my Lower-Back, and put out my hand to take the papers, which he held towards me. I opened them, standing in the middle of the sunny road. The first read:

"This is to certify that HOLDSWORTH W. BELDON is perfectly reliable and trustworthy. He has been in my employ for over four years, and there is no one in my office whom I consider more faithful to my interests.

(Signed)

WALTON F. G. HAIGHT,

"Editor of the *Star Union*."

Of course I knew that Mr. Haight was the editor of the *Star Union*. I turned to the other, which was written very differently from the first. Mr. Haight's recommendation was in a strong, heavy hand, an upright hand which wobbled first this way and then that. The second recommendation was written in a fine, thin hand, almost a lady's hand, and certified, very much in the same language, that Mr. Beldon was to be trusted with almost anything that this or any other world possessed. This was signed "John Everett." Somehow the names gave me much comfort, for I knew all about their owners, and felt confidence in the young man, my prospective boarder, from that moment.

"Very well," said I. "Go on to the house. I will be back soon. I'm just going in town for a locksmith."

"Indeed?" he laughed. "What has happened? The young woman hasn't locked herself in the cellar, has she?"

"No," said I, "but I've broken the lock of my desk. By the way, the young woman won't trouble you for long. She's going away."

"Going away?" His look was one of incredulity. "That's—that's better than I expected. What's the reason?"

"Well, I don't like some things about her."

"I hope I haven't frightened her away," said my new boarder. "I should be sorry to make you lose the rent of the room on my account. What's she done?"

"Well, I don't want to prejudice you——"

"Oh, you can't prejudice me. I always judge for myself. What's she done?"

"Well, she was out at the gate last night—it must have been all of twelve o'clock—with some man or other. She says he's her brother, but I do not believe it."

"Don't!" said the man. "I wouldn't. No one with a particle of sense could. The idea of a girl talking at the gate at twelve o'clock with her own brother! Why, it's beyond reason. It's a waste of raw material. I wouldn't believe a word she says, if she tells such stories as that. You see, if that man was her own brother, he might as well have been at some other gate with some other fellow's sister, and the other girl's brother might as well have been at your gate with your young woman. Well, I hope you'll get rid of her. I won't say by fair means or foul. I suppose she's got her living to make as well as the rest

of us, but I'd rather she'd make it elsewhere than in your lower front, if I'm to have the lower back."

"She's very quiet thus far," said I, thinking regretfully of the money spent and the bills locked up in the desk.

"I'm glad of that! No cackling girls yet, eh? Well, I'm sure I don't mind her talking with her brother, or any other girl's brother, at your front gate at twelve or at one in the morning. I am secure in my lower back, and then I am in town always at night, you know. Now I'm going home—that is, if you'll have me—to turn in. Don't wake me until five or six o'clock. Then I should like a bite of something, and I'll be off. You'll see that I am not a great eater."

"Thank heaven for that," I murmured, and proceeded on my way. The young man jumped upon his wheel and was off. A minute had passed, when I heard someone calling to me. I turned. It was Mr. Beldon coming back. My heart fell. Had he decided not to take the room? Had anything in my manner——"

"I came back to ask you how I can get into the room without the young woman seeing me. I just want to crawl in, you know, incog., as it were. Is there a side door, or a back door, or anything, where I——"

"Lock your wheel," said I, "and when you have opened the gate walk right round the left side of the house. Go on the grass. I hate to have you, but this time you may. You'll find my man-servant there, unless his wife has inveigled him up to the loft. If you hear groans, go up at once and protect him."

"Hear groans?"

"Yes, if she's beating him. If she isn't——"

"What a mysterious household!" exclaimed Mr. Beldon. "Really, you frighten a quiet man like me, a simple, helpless journalist. I don't know that I'll come, after all."

"Oh, there's nothing to be afraid of," returned I. "I only hope that if you hear Baldwin calling for help——"

"I am to go up and beat his wife?"

"No," said I, "not at all. Go up and beat him for being such a fool," and I turned away.

"Oh! one more thing," I called. "Don't forget it's the left side you're to go round, if you don't want her to see you."

"Who to see me?"

"Miss Dacres."

"Who's she?"

"The new boarder—J. A. Dacres. Those are her initials on the dress-suit case."

"Are they?" said he. He repeated the name, "J. A. Dacres, J. A. D. Oh, yes, I see, I see. Clever, very clever indeed! Well, I'll

go along. Round to the left, you say. Presumably she's on the right side of the house. Good-by," and he was off.

I walked towards the village, pondering what he meant by those words, "Clever! very clever indeed!"

III.

I PLODDED steadily on towards the town. As I neared the village I saw a carriage approaching me. As it passed I perceived that it held two occupants whom I well knew. They were Miss Elizabeth and Miss Evelyn from the Hall, or, rather, they used to be from the Hall and would now be again. They were in deep black, and were evidently on their way to the old Darlington place, where their brother had died. It seemed strange that I had almost forgotten all about the sensation of the hour because of my own troubles. The truth is, I had been thinking very deeply of the ladies when Miss Dacres came up to the gate the day before, but I had also been thinking very deeply of my own affairs. I really had not known where to turn until I found that I could let the rooms, and the completion of my arrangements had put everything else out of my mind. It seemed strange too that I should have been so forgetful of all that had happened at the Hall. I had been so at home there, in days gone by, as governess to Mr. Eugene's little girl and as friend to the older ladies, that I felt the death of the Squire very much, but Poverty is a master who drives away our tenderest thoughts, taking possession with his grim presence of the place which harbored them, and I was all at once aware that my anxiety as to how I was to get our bread and butter had made me somewhat forgetful of my duty. These thoughts flashed rapidly through my mind as I went onward, and then I heard the carriage stop and turn. I faced about at once.

"Isn't that Sophronia?" I heard, and in a moment the carriage-door was thrown open and I was drawn inside to Miss Elizabeth's kind arms.

They had both thrown up their veils, and first one kissed me and then the other.

"Drive a little way back with us, Sophronia dear," said Miss Evelyn, "and tell us all about it."

"Gladly," said I, as I took the place into which Miss Evelyn, being the younger, pushed me, on the back seat beside her sister. I sighed as I thought of the lock unpicked and the boarders' dinner to get, but I could do nothing but go with them. These dear ladies had been my friends when most I needed friends, and when the Judge married me, though he was no judge then, they gave me my wedding from the Hall. Since they and their brother had quarrelled about his changing his religion, and they had left the Hall for a home of

their own, I had seen little of him, though he always gave me a pleasant enough bow when I passed him on the road. The ladies had now come from their home at Springborough, called hither by telegrams, no doubt, and I could see that, having heard the news only yesterday, they could not have arrived before.

"Tell us all about it, dear," said Miss Elizabeth. "Did he suffer very much? Was it sudden? Poor David! I little thought when—but tell us, my dear, what you know."

"I can't tell you anything at all," said I gloomily, "or very little. I know almost nothing."

"What! Sophronia, that isn't like you. Never went near poor David in his last illness? Why, how could that be? So unlike——"

"I went, over and over again," said I. "When I found that I couldn't get in at the front door, I went round to the back to old Margot. Yes, she is still there. But there was no hope for me. I only heard each day that he was no better."

"But how perfectly absurd! Why couldn't you get in?"

"The priest wouldn't allow it, and there was no one to prevent. You know your brother had quar—was at odds with his old friends down in the village and over at Marchbank, and they none of them felt like interfering."

"Who took care of him?" asked Miss Elizabeth with tears in her eyes.

"A Sister of Charity, I believe. Margot told me so."

"Margot would hardly like that," said Miss Evelyn.

As I recalled the old Scotchwoman's stern face, and her anger at the priest dominating herself and everyone else in the house, I shook my head. "No," said I, "Margot was very indignant, but what could she do? She could have gone off and left him with them, but that she would not do. She could not desert Mr. David, she told me, no matter how he had treated her. She would not go and leave him in the hands of his self-appointed friends, strangers to everyone about here. 'I promised the old gentleman,' she said, 'that I would never leave Mr. David, and I won't!—not for the Pope himself.'"

"She is a very bitter Protestant," said Miss Evelyn, who had leanings towards Rome.

"She has excellent reason for being one," returned Miss Elizabeth. "She was brought up, as we all were, in the Scotch Presbyterian Church, and why should she change at her age?" She looked at unutterable things at Miss Evelyn as her sweet face would allow.

"We won't go into that, dear Elizabeth," said Miss Evelyn very gently. "Let us hear what we can from Sophronia before we reach the Hall."

"When did—did—my brother pass away?"

"It was the night before last," said I. "Baldy Towner told me at about seven o'clock in the morning, when I went to get the eggs."

"And you went up at once, of course?"

"Of what use?" said I. "I had been so many times. They would not let me in when he was living. How should I have got in when he was there no more?"

"Who nursed him?" asked Miss Elizabeth with tremulous voice.

"She told us, a Sister of Charity," said Miss Evelyn.

"They say she never left him night or day," added I.

"What was his illness, Sophronia? We have heard nothing, you see."

"The Squire broke his leg while hunting. Hadn't you heard even that? It was only two weeks ago. Fever set in, I believe. He sent for that Doctor he had down at the seashore, a Doctor Lestrangle. He thought there was nothing equal to Dr. Lestrangle. Of course, Dr. Williams did not like to interfere. I believe that he did once pay him a friendly visit, but Dr. Lestrangle was so distant, and your brother seemed to be so completely under his thumb, that Dr. Williams never went again. Margot said that the Squire wasted so fast, she couldn't see how it came about. He was a healthy man. Just a fractured leg, and he had a good constitution too."

"Has anything been said about a will?" asked Miss Evelyn.

"That makes little difference," said Miss Elizabeth. "He had but a few personal effects to will away."

"Not that I have heard," said I, answering Miss Evelyn. "Margot told me, the last time I was up there, that she had heard a good deal that wasn't intended for her to hear. One day she crept up the back stairs and listened at the door. The Sister of Charity was soothing him and talking in a very intimate way, much more so than you would suppose possible for a Sister, and he said to her, 'How can I ever repay you? No—there! Let me hold your hand, it can't do any harm. Shall I leave you something in my will?' 'Oh, no!' she said, 'oh, no! We can hold no property, you know, Squire Darlington. Perhaps if you were to give me some money, I might convey it to my sisterhood.'"

"'How good, how pious you Sisters are,' Margot heard him say. 'If I should put into your hands something valuable—very valuable—what would you do with it?'"

"Oh!" gasped Miss Elizabeth, "not that! Not that!" I looked at her. She was very pale.

"Go on, Sophronia," said Miss Evelyn.

I continued: "'I would turn it into money,' she said, 'and give it to the church. But I should have to have a deed of gift from you.'"

"'There are some jewels,' said your brother."

"Not the rubies!" ejaculated Miss Evelyn. "He could not have meant my mother's rubies. Oh, he could not! Could he, Elizabeth?"

"Oh, I should think not, indeed," said Miss Elizabeth. "I should think not!"

"But you put them away, Elizabeth. You hid them, did you not?"

"Yes, before we left so—so unpleasantly, you know, I took them from David's drawer and——"

"I remember what you said, Elizabeth. You said: 'Now, Evelyn, David has turned us out. He may marry again. We do not know what he may do, and I intend to hide these jewels, which were left to all four of us. You and I have as much interest and as much right in them as David has, since Eugene is dead, and, as we represent a two-thirds share, I shall put them where he cannot get them without consulting us.'"

"And so I——" broke in Miss Elizabeth. "Well, I never told you where, but I remember, though it was three years ago, as if it were yesterday, and I can go right to the spot this minute."

"Perhaps he's changed the place," said I.

"He'd never find it," said Miss Elizabeth.

"And if he could, I never will believe," said Miss Evelyn, "that David Darlington was the sort of a man to defraud his sisters. You are prejudiced, Elizabeth. The Catholics I have known were the best of Christians. Margot must have heard wrong."

"I don't believe she heard wrong," said I. "She said that he told her, I mean the Sister, that the thing he was thinking of was in the house somewhere, and that when he got well enough he would——"

"Told whom?"

"The Sister of Charity. This, in fact, was only two or three days ago,—the last time that I was up there,—Margot told me then, and she said the Sister replied, 'Well, there! there! Don't bother! If you can tell me where you think it is, I could look for you.'"

"What did she look like?"

"I never saw her, but they told me, those that saw her, that she had a pale face and dark hair; her hair was smoothed back in bands under the cap of her order. Then your brother had a sinking spell, and the Sister called the Priest. Margot listened a good deal, and whenever she could creep up the stairs unknown to any of them she stood as long as she could at that back door. Once, when she heard the Sister go out of the room and down the stairs, she opened the back door and came in softly. She went up quickly to the bed and said, 'Oh, Master David, Master David, my little David! What are they doing to ye?' She said he looked up with the frightened eyes of a child. 'They've got ye under their dominion. Listen to yer old

Margot, who never told ye wrong. Send for the ladies, Master David, sir. Send for the ladies, they'll——'

"And then in came the Priest. He took her by the arm, she said, with a grip of iron, and put her out of the back door and bolted it. The next time she listened was on the night that he died. She said that she heard the Sister speaking very sternly to him, somewhat in this way: 'You will tell me before I leave this room where those jewels are.'

"'Oh! oh!' he cried out, 'how you have changed! How you have changed! Oh! oh! I am afraid! I am afraid! Margot! Margot!'

"'You need not call upon Margot,' said the Sister. 'Are you going to keep your promise or not?'

"'Oh, yes! yes!' he said. 'Oh, yes! yes! They are here in this room. I will tell you to-morrow.'

"Indeed, they were not," sobbed Miss Elizabeth through her tears. "Poor David, poor, poor David! But go on, Sophronia."

"'In this room?' said she,—'you swear it?'

"'Yes, yes. So soon as I am able to——'

"And then Margot heard steps coming towards the door, and she fled down the stairs.

"That was a dreadful night. She heard the Doctor and the Priest talking together in the parlor in low tones, and when she tried to listen, they closed the door and moved across the room. She heard a great deal of movement in the sick-chamber, much walking across the floor and opening of drawers, but towards morning all was quiet and she fell asleep. When she awoke it was broad daylight. The kitchen clock had stopped at twenty minutes to five. There was not a sound in the house. At last the stillness frightened her. She crept up to the back door; it was bolted on the inside. She listened; there was no sound. Then patient and nurse must both be asleep. She ran down the stairs, and, coming out into the front hall, she walked haltingly, feeling her way, as it were, for she had been so often turned back, poor thing! But no one turned her back that day. She saw not a soul. She looked into the parlor; no one was there. She glanced in at the dining-room; no one was there,—only Julia laying the cloth for Father Darby's and the Doctor's breakfast. She then began to mount the stairs, listening, listening. She stopped a moment and leaned over the balustrade.

"'Julia,' she called, 'Julia, where are they all?'

"'Ain't up yet,' said Julia, and went on setting her table.

"'It must be late,' said Margot. 'My clock has stopped.'

"'I guess it's dretful late,' said Julia, and yawned. Just at that moment Margot heard wheels and she ran down the stairs again and to the front door. She found it unbolted and unlocked. She opened the great hall-door, and found that it was the butcher, driving up the

avenue. He came slowly along the drive, and turned off to go round to the kitchen. Margot waved her hand to him and stopped him. He looked surprised. She ran down the front steps and up to the cart. All at once, when she got to where Allibone stood, she burst out crying.

"What's the matter with the woman?" exclaimed Allibone.

"I don't know," said Margot, "but I'm that glad to see you. There's something queer. Will you come into the house?"

"Why, I'm just going round to——"

"No," said Margot. "Please come in now with me. There's something wrong. I smell it in the air."

"What! In at the front-door?" asked Allibone,—“me?”

"Yes, you," said Margot. "I dar'n't go back alone."

"Just then the village clock struck ten."

"Margot listened as the strokes pealed out upon the air. As the eighth note sounded, she looked up at the butcher with a hope in her face that it would be the last stroke, but no! nine came booming over from Galtersville, and then, oh horrors! one more."

"Ten!" she cried. "Is that right?"

"It be," said Allibone.

"Come at once," said Margot, and ran towards the house. She raced up the great, broad steps, Allibone after her, and through the hall, and up into the Squire's bedroom. Everything stood wide. She ran right up to the bed, but though his poor eyes were open, he would never know her again. All was over for the dear Squire."

Miss Evelyn was sobbing as I ended; Miss Elizabeth was more quiet, but her tears were raining down fast.

I resumed my tale, for I saw that we were approaching my own home, and I felt now that I should probably have to give up my trip to the village for that day at least. "Allibone ran up the stairs after Margot and pushed in at the door. 'Some villain's hand has been at work!' he cried; and then Margot turned from the stare of those open eyes and looked around the room. It was in dreadful disorder. Papers were strewn about, all sorts of clothing lay upon the floor, the chairs were overturned, the coverings ripped open. In fact, it was evident to Margot that the poor Squire had been in the hands of unprincipled creatures, and that the so-called Priest, Sister of Charity, and Doctor had all been masquerading and in league to defraud him of his belongings. Margot began to tidy up the room, and then Allibone ran down the stairs, saying, 'I'm going for the police.' And the police are in charge now."

"Do they think that—that—my brother was—was—foully dealt with?" asked Miss Elizabeth faintly.

"Dr. Williams doesn't say. They tell me that the police have closed his mouth. They have the great detective Jennings employed on

the case. I heard that there was not a scratch nor a mark on his body,—the Squire's,—and no blood, and no sign of violence."

"Thank God for that!" said Miss Elizabeth reverently. Just here we came to the end of my fence, the end nearest the village, where the road turns and runs around to the Hall.

"How pretty your little home looks," said Miss Evelyn through her tears. "It seems sweet to see it again. But don't get out, Sophronia, don't! Come with us to the Hall. I cannot bear to go alone. We need someone—but—but—who are those?"

I looked out of the window across Miss Elizabeth's black draperies, and saw, to my infinite astonishment, my Lower-Back apparently in very interesting conversation with my Lower-Front.

"They—they—are some boarders I—I—have taken," I stammered. Miss Elizabeth stretched out her hand and took mine within it. "My poor Sophronia! Has it come to that? My poor Sophronia!" As the carriage passed I saw my Lower-Back look towards it, then turn suddenly and run around the house and disappear. Miss Dacres leaned back in my rocker and closed her eyes.

"Are they friends?" asked Miss Evelyn, with some interest.

"No! Never saw each other before this morning to my certain knowledge. They are utter strangers to each other," said I. "He hated the idea of her being there, and she is disgusted with the thought of his coming. I hoped to get rid of her to-day, but now I suppose I'll have to keep her until to-morrow."

"Why?"

And now I began to show some emotion on my part, as I told my kind friends in what an unpleasant predicament I had been placed.

"And you were going for a locksmith when we turned you back. Poor little Sophronia! You must go back in the carriage!"

We drove on past my home, past the farmland next it, by the mill, "Marchbank," and "The Larches," and then a sudden turn brought us in at the gate of Darlington Hall. Miss Elizabeth looked out with streaming eyes.

"I often think what it would have been to have brother Eugene back again," said she. "Things might have been different then. He had a good deal of control over David, more than any of us had, though he was the youngest of all."

"I suppose you are certain about his death?" said I.

"Yes, oh, yes. His wife, you know, died long before he did. What I worry about most is the child. It was a girl. I have never been able to discover any trace of her. Our lawyers, Smithers & Blake, think they have certain proof of her death also, but I can't bear to believe that she is dead.

"How old would she have been had she lived?"

"Don't say 'had she lived,' Sophronia. Say 'how old is she now?' I will never believe that little Amaranthe is dead until I have better proof than I have to-day."

"Amaranthe!" I said slowly.

"Yes, why not Amaranthe? Why not? Why, Sophronia? You remember our little Amaranthe, surely?"

"Of course I remember her; I have heard the name lately, that is all."

I had noticed a constable at the gate as we turned in at the grounds of Darlington Hall, but though he looked scrutinizingly at us, he did not attempt to stop the carriage, which was, or had been, the Squire's own, sent by Dr. Williams for the ladies. Their deep mourning also saved them from closer inspection, and then too I was with them, and John Sommers had known me from a child. He was our annual, perennial, ever-vernal constable, and as such knew every man, woman, and child in the village and for miles around. As we approached the house, we saw that there was another man in plain blue clothes standing by one of the great pillars of the old colonial porch, and before the carriage stopped Dr. Williams came hurriedly out of the house, bare-headed and properly solemn. He opened the carriage-door. He and the man in blue clothes helped the ladies from the carriage.

"Thank you, Jennings," said the Doctor. "Thank you." So this was the great detective, Bob Jennings! He looked slight and simple enough, though I knew later that he was about thirty-eight years of age at this time.

"Won't you come in with us, Sophronia?" asked Miss Elizabeth.

"If you really need me," I said, "but I have so much to occupy me——"

"We do not need Mrs. Brathwaite," said Dr. Williams kindly.

"Very well then, Sophronia. Good-by, my dear. Come up when you can. We shall see you to-morrow, shall we not?"

"Oh, yes," I cried.

"Take Mrs. Brathwaite back to the village, John," said Miss Elizabeth to the old coachman, whom she had known since her childhood, "and when she has finished her errands drive her home."

I found the locksmith at home. I did not like to ask him to drive up in the Hall carriage, but he started on his wheel as I left his shop, and after I had got my stamps I saw that he was ahead of us, and so he kept all the way home. When I arrived at my gate he was standing on the porch looking over his keys and the little crooked pieces of iron with which he was accustomed to pick locks. I took him at once to my room and showed him the desk.

"Somebody's be'n tamperin' with this key," he said.

"I should think so," replied I. "I have worked at it until my fingers are bare."

It was but a few moments before he had the broken key out of the lock, another one fitted, and the desk open. I paid him the trifle that he asked, and he went out and I closed the door.

Then I opened the little drawer. It was quite empty! Could I have made a mistake? I opened all the drawers, rapidly, in succession. There was nothing there in the shape of money except the few remaining bits of change that had been left after I had paid the locksmith. I sat down to think, and my suspicions could fall upon but one person. Then I arose wearily. I went to Aunt Jane Mary's room to answer her repeated calls.

"What's the matter?" she asked, as I staggered in at the door. "How white you look."

"I am tired," said I. "What can I do for you?"

"Just rub that right leg, will you? I declare, I get less attention than anyone in the county. Where have you been?"

I began to rub Aunt Jane Mary's leg and to talk while I rubbed,—answer questions rather.

"I have been to the locksmith's," said I.

"Did he come?"

"Yes."

"Did he open the desk?"

"Yes," said I.

"Well, well, was everything all right? How you do have to be poked and prodded, Sophronia. One would think I was a dentist drawing teeth! I never had such a time with any one——"

I made no reply; I could not.

"Are you going to answer me?"

"Oh, yes," said I, "if you want to be made as miserable as I am. The money's gone!"

"The money! What money?"

"The money Miss Dacres gave me to keep for her."

"Who is Miss Dacres?"

"The new boarder." I had forgotten that I had not told Aunt Jane Mary her name.

"I don't believe you ever put it there."

"Yes, I did. I know I did. I am worried to death." I stopped rubbing Aunt Jane Mary's leg and burst out crying. "How shall I ever repay her?"

"I wouldn't worry about it," said Aunt Jane Mary, "it's in the house somewhere."

"I am afraid it isn't," said I. "That's what comes of taking in people without any recommendation."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Miss Dacres."

"Well, you are stupid! What should the woman want to steal her own money for?"

"I forgot that," said I. "Oh, dear! What shall I do?"

"Have you suspected anyone else?" asked Aunt Jane Mary, with what I thought a sly look at me.

"I don't see how anyone could get into it—the desk, I mean. The key was broken off in the lock."

"No! that puts a new face on it," said Aunt Jane Mary, sitting up in bed. "What other strangers have been about the house?"

"Well, the Lower-Back didn't come until after the lock was broken, and, besides, he has splendid references, and there's no one else." Just here someone came hurriedly up the back stairs.

"Kin I git thet stew-pan, Miss Jane Mary?" said Glorianna.

"Oh, yes, there is!" said I, "I forgot," and Aunt Jane Mary and I looked at each other in silence.

I went about my work sad and silent. When my Lower-Front came in for her late dinner—everything was belated that day—she asked me if I had got the desk open.

"Yes," said I.

"Oh, that's all right," said she. Then she added, "Who is that thumping round on the floor over my room? It makes me dreadfully nervous."

"No one," said I. I have a proverbially quiet step, and no one ever went to Aunt Jane Mary's room but myself.

"Perhaps it's that new woman," said she.

"I don't think Glorianna had been in there until I came home. Do you mean lately?"

"No, I mean when you were away at the village. It sounded like the tramp of an elephant. If that's going on, I may as well leave at once."

Oh dear! Oh dear! Leave! How could she leave?

"I think I'll go this afternoon. You know you as much as gave me warning this morning, and on that account I need not pay for more than I have had, or longer than I have stayed."

"I was surprised to see you in very animated conversation with the Lower-Back!" said I, changing the subject to gain time.

"When?"

"As I drove back from the village with the ladies."

"What ladies?"

"Squire Darlington's sisters. They were going to the Hall."

"Were those his sisters?" She asked the question in the most interested manner. "Well, I thought one looked like—but what do you mean about the Lower-Back? He hasn't come, has he?"

"Why, I saw you talking with him as I drove past."

"Oh, was that your new boarder? Why, I thought he was the locksmith, he looked so shabby. He asked if you were at home, and I told him you were not, and then he asked whom he could see, and I told him there was a giant in the back yard who would answer his questions, and he laughed and ran around the house. Was that really your new boarder? Well, well!"

"The locksmith knew that I was behind him," said I.

"How should your new boarder know that, or how should I? I didn't know where you were. I haven't been at your heels all day."

"Oh, no," said I. "If you had, then you would know a terrible thing that I have to tell you. I really don't know how I am to tell it."

"What can there be so terrible that you——" She suddenly stopped and gasped, and then arose and stood by the piazza rail in a dazed sort of way. She clutched it as she had before, and steadied herself by it. "Go on," she said. "Go on. What can you know—what can you have to——"

Again she looked at me with scared face. She had flushed crimson, as naturally pale persons sometimes do. "Go on."

"I suppose you suspect what it is from my anxiety," said I. "Your money is gone!"

I shall never forget the look of relief that overspread her features.

"Oh!" she said, "oh!" and suddenly sat down and hid her face in her hands. "I thought something had happened to mother or to Waldemar, or the lad. I thought—you can't tell how much you have relieved my mind. Only the money. Please don't frighten me that way again."

"It seemed to me the worst thing in the world."

"Why?"

"Because you might suspect me—or—or someone in the house. I haven't an idea where it is, but I know it's gone."

"Well, it does rather complicate matters. I suppose I'll have to stay until you find it."

"I suppose so, and that's worse than all."

"You're very complimentary," laughed Miss Dacres. "Well, of course you can understand that I cannot afford to go away without my money. I was counting on that to pay my board for ever so long. You can see that, can't you?"

"Yes, I can see that, of course. You don't think for a moment that I have taken it, do you?" I cried, the tears coming to my eyes.

"Your face is as good as a Trust Company," said she, laughing and showing her white teeth. "No, I should never dream of accusing you. In fact, I think it's dreadful to accuse anyone. Have you any plan to go upon?"

"No," said I, "unless I consult the police."

*

"I wouldn't do that yet," said she. "Perhaps it's only mislaid. My idea is that the old lady abovestairs took it to frighten you."

"She couldn't get it," said I. "She can't get out of her bed alone."

"Oh, can't she? Tell that to the marine—I mean, I do not agree with you. She has given me evidence enough this morning that she can and will get out of her bed when occasion offers."

"Absurd!" said I. "You don't know Aunt Jane Mary."

"And I'm sure you don't," said she.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing," said she.

"Well, you'll have to remain, I suppose, for the present," said I.

"I'll see about that," she answered. "It depends on how you treat me. I'm sure I'm very good to stay when I hadn't done anything to cause you such distrust of me."

"I must have your room swept to-morrow," said I. "Can you go out for a while?"

"I don't know why my room should be swept to-morrow. I've been here only twenty-four hours all told. Besides, I don't want that little vixen"—she nodded her head towards the kitchen—"in my room."

"You came in so suddenly, and your shoes, you remember, were muddy." I thought she gave an impatient jerk of the shoulders at my remark, but she said nothing.

"No, I can't sweep your room to-morrow, after all. I must go to the funeral. I forgot that."

"Whose? Oh, yes, I know."

At about six o'clock I came down and found the parlor-door open and the sun streaming in. Astonished at the freedom of someone, I knew not who, I went in at the door. There I found Mr. Beldon sitting, reading the *Star Union*. He jumped up as I came in, and stood while I said,—

"Are you ready for your tea now?"

"Yes," said he, "that's what I'm waiting for." I preceded him into the dining-room, where a light meal had been laid. He seated himself, saying, "First rate! Just what I like!" and fell to.

"You seem to have got over your horror of my boarder," said I, to make conversation.

"How is that?" said he, looking up quickly.

"Why, when I drove past here this morning, going to the Hall, I saw you apparently in deep conversation with her."

"Was that your other boarder? I thought it was one of the family. I asked her how soon she thought you would get back."

"She said you posed as the locksmith."

"Oh, no! she couldn't have said that."

"Well, she said she thought you were the locksmith."

"That's a different matter. Very complimentary, I'm sure. Now, another cup of that nice tea, and I'm off to old Haight's dungeon. You don't know how he works us fellows."

I saw him run lightly down the steps in the dusk, jump on his wheel, and spin down the road. I went into his room. He had been on the bed, but not in it. I called Glorianna to help me tidy the room. There were bits of newspaper lying about and scraps of letter-paper, with *Star Union* at the top and parts of articles such as young men write, or as I suppose they write, for the daily journals.

At seven I gave Miss Dacres her supper, and then sat down to rest, but there was no rest for me. Aunt Jane Mary called me. Then I had to settle an argument between Baldy and Glorianna, and by the time I got to bed I was very tired and slept like a log.

I got up early the next morning and went into Aunt Jane Mary's room.

"Do you know what?" said she, sitting up in bed, the rabbit's ears sticking up in apparent exposition of the horror of her soul.

"Do I know what?"

"Yes, do you know what? That girl's a boy."

"What girl? Glorianna? How absurd! Why, we've known Glorianna——"

"Glorianna. I should think not,—Glorianna! No, the Lower-Front. She's a boy."

I looked at Aunt Jane Mary in amaze! "How do you know?" said I.

"Cigarette smoke. I thought so last night, now I know it."

"Nonsense," said I. "It might be the Lower-Back or Baldy Towner. You forget that we have two real men in the house now."

"You told me the Lower-Back went into the city for the night, and Baldy Towner sleeps over the stable—what used to be the stable."

"Yes," said I, sighing,— "what used to be the stable. Well, if the wind was this way——"

"Sophronia Willoughby Brathwaite! You know no man was ever allowed to smoke in that barn, not in the Judge's time, nor yet in mine."

"He might have done it all the same," said I. "We have to shut our eyes to a great deal in this world."

"That's true," said Aunt Jane Mary. "But there's one thing you can't shut if you try, not unless you put a clothespin on it, and that's your nose; the smell came right up through the floor."

"Perhaps Mr. Beldon came home early, and it was he who smoked."

"He has no business to come home early. He said——"

"Oh, yes, he has," said I. "He has a right to use the room at any time. But Miss Dacres may even smoke and not be a boy."

"And look at her hair!" exclaimed Aunt Jane Mary, "and her slang! You'll never convince me she isn't a boy until——"

Aunt Jane Mary did not say when that time would come, and I must say that what she had given voice to stayed by me and had its effect on me to a certain degree.

"Miss Dacres has a boy's ways and tones and manners; and her hair! If ever I saw boy's hair, it is her short, coarse curls."

"Well," said I, "boy or no boy, she has got to stay until I find her money. I'm going to the funeral now, and when I come home I shall bring either John Sommers or his advice with me. You needn't mind any of them coming up to wait on you, there's nothing to steal." I sighed again. "Here's your bell," and I ran hurriedly down the stairs.

Aunt Jane Mary's bell rang before I got to the front door. I had put it too near her. I went back wearily.

"Well?" I exclaimed, somewhat impatiently, I fear.

"There's another thing. You run off so! I heard voices under my window last night."

"Oh, dear! Aunt Jane Mary, don't tell me of any more mysteries. I am so tired of them. Her brother came out to see her the night before last. Perhaps he came out last night. I can't help it. She may be a liar or a murderess, anything in the wide world, but here she must stay until I find that money," and I ran down the stairs again and ran out of the house and out of the gate and half-way to the Hall.

I found the people assembling in the great hall, but Miss Elizabeth sent Margot to tell me that she wanted to see me upstairs, that I was to come down with the family to the library. I went up as I was bid. Miss Elizabeth drew me into a small room off the chamber where her brother had died. She kissed me, and whispered in my ear, "They're here! I've found them. Just where I put them three years ago."

"What?" asked I in an awed whisper.

"The jewels," she whispered. "The jewels, my dear mother's rubies. I think those were what they were looking for, those wretches! And I think that in some way they compassed my poor brother David's death." She drew down the shade, closed the door, and locked it. Then she went to the fireplace. "Here," she said. "This upright slab was always loose. I often pulled it down as a child. When I went away, I drew it out so," she suited her action to her words. "I deposited this case within and then sealed it up with a little plaster-of-Paris. I took the rubies from a drawer in the library, a secret drawer; we all knew the secret. They were mine, as much as his, and you see now how wise I was. Had I not done so, those wretches would have had them to-day." She had in her hand the blue velvet case which I knew so well. She opened it, and even in that darkened room the

wonderful rubies shone forth with a million dazzling rays. There was a knock at the door. Miss Elizabeth hurriedly replaced the case. "Yes, yes," she called, "I am coming; I will be there at once." She pushed the slab in place, stuck a folded piece of paper underneath the mantel to keep it firm, and then unlocked the door. Miss Evelyn stood there. "I was showing Sophronia where they have been hidden all these long years," she whispered. "It is my belief that David never tried even to look at them after we left. And until he promised that Sister of Charity something of value he never thought of getting them out of that secret drawer. Then, too, he could not move, Margot says, and when they began to threaten him—oh, yes! Margot has told me all about it—he found what a foolish thing he had done, and would not tell them anything. David was always stubborn, even if he died for it, and he probably did. Poor David! Poor David! I wish he had died at peace with us." Miss Elizabeth wiped her eyes. "I was always at peace with him. But let us go down."

We descended the broad stairs. Dr. Williams met us at the foot in deep black, with the clergyman of Miss Elizabeth's old church, and we went into the library and sat while the service was read.

I went with them to the grave, and then they insisted on my going home with them. This I did, and remained all day. It seemed so like old times. We talked of many things, Miss Elizabeth, Miss Evelyn, and I,—about the Squire and his queer ways; about their mother; about my marriage from the Hall, and, above all, of their brother Eugene and his young wife and little daughter. It was because of the child that I had gone to the Hall to live. I had had entire care of Mr. Eugene Darlington's little girl. She was the sweetest little thing. Hair like a sunbeam; eyes as large and blue as corn-flowers. It was only when Mrs. Eugene grew so ill, and pined to see her mother and father, that Eugene consented to take her away to the West where they lived. Wisconsin was the State, I remembered. We talked of Mrs. Eugene's death, of Eugene's wandering life after that, of his going out to India, and of his death there. "And the child, the child," whispered Miss Elizabeth. "Sometimes I think she may be living; sometimes I think she may have died. Sometimes I think we have a trace of her; again it is lost. Oh! to think of having the little thing running about the house!"

"Little thing!" said I. "You forget, Miss Elizabeth, that she would be twenty-two had she lived until now."

"So she would," said Miss Elizabeth; "so she would. Little Amaranthe! little Amaranthe!"

That was why the name of Miss Dacres had struck me so strangely. It was so unusual a name, and I had never heard it since I had been nursery governess to little Amaranthe Darlington.

IV.

THE next morning when the breakfast things were washed I knocked at Miss Dacres's door. I heard the slamming of a drawer, and then she came hurriedly across the room. When she opened the door her face was flushed.

"What is it?" she asked. "Oh! to sweep. Well, I'll let you come in, but I won't have that Vinegar Cruet out there in the kitchen inside these walls. Now promise me. I'm getting rather rested, and I want to take a long spin on my wheel."

"I'll sweep it myself," said I. "I promise you. By the way, Miss Dacres, have you heard any unusual noises round the house?—at night, I mean."

Her face flushed again. "What do you mean?" she said. "Oh, how you do love to frighten people! What sort of noises?"

"Why, voices talking—very low voices. My aunt says she hears——"

The color faded, the usual pallor returned to her cheeks at my words.

"Your aunt is a ridiculous old chum—I mean, she is very easily frightened. I think she is fanciful. There have been no voices. I should certainly have heard them if there had been."

"She says she smells cigarette smoke, and——"

"Oh, do you object to that too? Why, it's a sort of a Sunday-school out here, isn't it? Well, I may as well confess. I'm the culprit. I smoke cigarettes. It's quite the fashion, you know. I have done it since I was fifteen, but if you are really so opposed to it——"

"How old are you now, if I may ask?" said I.

"I was twenty-two last February—the seventeenth," she answered, without the smallest sign of being annoyed at my familiarity. "It's funny about that. There was always a discussion about that between my father and mother. Father always insisted that I had been born on the eighteenth because he declared it was two minutes after twelve on the night of the seventeenth. My mother said that I had been born on the seventeenth because the clock on her mantel pointed to five minutes of the hour. At least father used to tell me so. That was when we were travelling in India. I don't remember my mother very well, I was a small girl when she died, and so much has come between—— But I must be starting, or you won't have time to——"

"Tell me a little more about yourself," I said. Her words had awakened a train of thought that would not down. I heard just such a discussion regarding a birth of which I knew. "Who was your father? Where did he live? Where did he die?"

"Who said that my father was dead?" She smiled a little.

"You did—no, not exactly that, but you gave me to understand——"

"I can't tell you anything more now. I must get out this lovely day; besides," she smiled again, "how do you know there is anything more to tell? Good-by, I'm off. Keep Vinegar Cruet out of my room," and she flung out of the door and down the steps. I looked out of the window and saw her mount her wheel and ride away.

My mind was filled with many strange thoughts. I closed the door, opened all the windows, covered the bed with the dust sheet, and went to the closet door to hang up some of Miss Dacres's belongings. The door was locked. "She does not trust us over much," thought I. I then began to move the furniture to the middle of the room. It was tiresome work, and I pushed and tugged at the old, heavy pieces, which seemed as if glued to the floor.

The bureau was the most difficult of all to handle, but I managed to get it away from the wall. I pulled one side out into the room, and was just about to begin to throw my tea-leaves behind it when I saw something on the floor. I stooped and picked up a parcel. It seemed to be a bundle of letters. I laid them upon the top of the bureau, and was resuming my duties—but stop! There was something else. Two little square things lay upon the floor. I stooped to pick them up, when there gazed upward at me from each of the old-fashioned tintypes the faces of little Amaranthe Darlington as I had seen her last, on the day that her father and mother left the Hall for their trip to Wisconsin. And then I saw a case half hidden under the bureau, and dragging that out, I opened it. I felt that I had the right, for again Amaranthe looked forth at me, as she might have looked a year or two after she had parted from me. To say that I was astounded, overcome, does not half declare my feeling. Amaranthe! Amaranthe Darlington! here, and in the possession of Miss Dacres!

I turned towards the package of letters; I hesitated not.

Aunt Jane Mary began to thump with her cane, but for once I was deaf to her summons. I untied the rusty black ribbon. Yes, yes; they were family letters, letters addressed to Eugene Darlington, Esquire, from his "Affectionate brother David." Letters from Miss Elizabeth beginning, "Much loved and widely-parted brother." There were letters from Miss Evelyn, calling him "My dear boy," and there were letters to little Amaranthe. I read them through, as many as I could, and then I looked at the clock, to see how the time had flown. I had been there an hour. Oh dear! If I could but read the rest! What was I to think. What was I to feel! Could this young woman have known the little Amaranthe of my earlier days? Stop! Could she be little Amaranthe herself? Would she have remembered me if I had not changed my name from Willoughby to Brathwaite? Where

had she come from? Was she here to search out her relatives? Of that I could not be in doubt. It came upon me suddenly. All at once I seemed to understand her appearance among us. She had said that her purpose would find its outcome by August. Was she really the little child whom I had taught? I recalled little Amaranthe's eyes of heaven-blue and her light hair. I should have said that it was much finer hair than the hair of my boarder, but, after all, I must not forget that keeping the hair short makes it coarse. I took the letters in my hand, determined that I would get them again some time and copy them, and show them to the ladies at the Hall. I laid the package back on the floor and the portraits also. I was not as yet prepared to have Miss Dacres know that I had seen them. I pushed the bureau back against the wall and began my sweeping. I worked desperately to get my work done before my boarder should return, but it was late afternoon before I saw her again. At about half after five she came down the road from the direction of the country, and ten minutes later Mr. Beldon came spinning along from the village.

She ran hastily into her room and closed the door, just giving a backward glance down the road. Mr. Beldon came up on to the piazza and stopped for a moment.

"I took a day off to-day," said he. "My father isn't well, and I had to go and see him. It's pretty hard to do one's legitimate work, sit up all night in a newspaper office, and visit a sick man in the daytime."

"Yes, it must be," said I feelingly. "Nursing is hard at the best of times."

"I shall take a rest until seven," he said. "Call me, please, at that time. I won't trouble you for any tea to-night. I'm going in to the city again as soon as you call me."

When I went to call Miss Dacres to her tea, she said, "Who swept my room this morning?"

"I told you that I should," said I, "and I did. Isn't it done to your satisfaction?"

"Well, not exactly; I'm rather particular. I've been moving the things to see if it was clean, and I'm sure you never swept behind the bureau."

"No," I confessed, "I didn't."

"Why not?"

"Well, the bureau's a heavy piece of furniture, and I am not very strong, and you would not allow me to bring Glorianna in, as you said——"

"Well, it was just as well to-day," said she, "because I found that some things had slipped down behind out of the crack at the back of the drawer, and I shouldn't care to have anyone see them, but please

sweep there next time, even if you have to call in Vinegar Cruet to help you move the furniture."

"Very well," said I, "since you give me permission."

"I feel so much better for my ride," said she. "I'm going out every day on my wheel. I think I shall take my lunch somewhere to-morrow and come home late, as I did to-day."

And now I was determined to get those letters, or copies of them, if I should be imprisoned for it. I lay awake far into the night, thinking the matter over. I determined not to speak to the ladies until I was certain. The next morning she was off, and at about eleven o'clock I was putting the finishing touches to her room—I mean the ordinary work of the day. She had not gone more than a mile before I began to move the bureau out from the wall. I had edged it out a little way when I heard the gate click, and pushing the bureau hastily back, I stood upright, and began to dust again the immaculate top of the old piece of furniture. As I did so, I raised my eyes to see Miss Dacres looking in through the open window.

"There you are, busy as ever," said she. "Just hand me my little coat, will you? I forgot it. There it is, hanging over the rocker. That's it; thank you. Now I'm really off," and she was.

I wondered if I looked conscious as she stood at the window. When I was sure that she was well away, I again pushed the bureau out into the room, and then I leaned down and began to work at the drawer. While jerking and pushing I heard a rustle. She could not have pushed the letters back very securely the day before, for, lying flat on the floor, I again perceived that packet. I took it up hastily, and withdrawing one letter, I restored the packet through the wide crack and then pushed the bureau back again. I then wondered, with the guilty conscience of a novice in deceit, if Mr. Beldon could by any possibility be at home. But of course he was. My day was his night. I went to the door between the rooms and put my eye to the keyhole. The keyhole was dark. I could see nothing. I went out of the door, and round through the hall, and tried the door of my Lower-Back. "What? What? Coming," I heard. He was rather slow in coming, and I waited. Finally he opened his door. I glanced at the keyhole as I stood there. He looked curiously at me as I did so. He seemed to be trying to repress a smile.

A piece of dark cloth was pinned so that it hung over the key.

"So you think I am very secretive," said he. "I have no fancy for having that girl in there peeking at me."

"I am surprised to see you at home," said I, in a sort of embarrassment.

"Surprised? Why? Didn't I say I should be at home during the day?"

"Yes," said I, "so you did. I declare I get so confused with you and the Lower-Front—Miss Dacres, I mean—and my invalid aunt, and Baldy and Glorianna, not to speak of the Hall, that I—that I don't know which is the day-bird and which the night-bird."

"Ah, the Hall! That's just exactly something I want to speak to you about. I hear that they have been putting the newspapers on the case, and they're sort of detectives, you know. I told old Haight that I was not willing to do any such work, especially as you had asked me not to, though I didn't tell him anything about you, of course. I am in mortal dread that he will find out that I am located out here close to the Hall. Then he will think it the easiest thing in the world for me to write the article he wants. Of course, I could do it, but then I should not be keeping my compact with you. I don't want him to know anything about it, so, if some reporter comes out here, please don't mention me or my connection with the *Star Union*."

"Certainly not," said I; "I appreciate your kindness very much."

"You are awfully good," said Mr. Beldon. "You can see what trouble you'd get me into with the editors. They'd probably dismiss me from the paper. They think we must do whatever job they put us on, regardless of our feelings. I wouldn't have minded ordinarily, but as I almost promised you, and as I like your house so much——"

"Then it is better than you thought it was going to be?"

"Oh, yes,—much better! The lady in the front room hasn't disturbed me at all as yet. She did move her furniture about a good deal yesterday——"

"That was I," said I, "and again this morning. I am extremely sorry, but the rooms must be swept sometimes, you know."

"To change the subject," said Mr. Beldon, "who's that old lady that came into my room last night?"

"Into your room! Why, were you at home? Oh, yes! I remember you said you should take a night's rest. Why, I'm sure I can't tell you. You must have been dreaming. It must have been Glorianna, if anyone, but she——"

"Oh, no, I know her; she's the man of Baldy's house, isn't she? Oh, no, not Glorianna at all. It was a large, heavy old lady——"

"There is absolutely no one," said I. "My aunt is indeed large and heavy, but, unfortunately, she cannot move. She is an invalid, and cannot get up without help, and then not without great pain."

"Then," said Mr. Beldon, "your house is haunted."

"What time was it?" I asked.

"Well, I really don't know. I was so sleepy that I hardly waked up enough to see whether it was man or woman. I heard a slight noise, more like a *pouff*! so, and opened my eyes, and there was this creature at my table, turning over my papers."

"Don't you lock your door?"

"Never thought of such a thing—I have nothing to steal; but I shall hereafter."

"Did—did—it go out, then?"

"Yes, vanished, with a sort of heavy lope, before you could say 'Jack Robinson.' I lay there, wondering what it could all mean. After about ten minutes I thought I'd get up and investigate, but the hall was as dark as a tomb. Now who do you think it was?"

"I'm sure I can't tell," said I. "Not Aunt Jane Mary certainly. However, I advise you to lock your door hereafter."

"Then it would have to be ghosts," said Mr. Beldon, laughing. "No, I think the best way will be to go on believing it's human. By the way, did you find that money?"

Now, I had never told Mr. Beldon about my strange loss.

"What money?" I said.

"Oh, I beg your pardon;" he looked confused. "I heard a whisper about it. Servants always catch on to those things, you know."

"Yes, I know they do," said I. "It's in the very air sometimes. Well, is there anything I can do for you?"

"So you don't want to answer about the money. Very well then. No, nothing you can do; only lay the ghosts, and keep the old lady overhead quiet."

"Quiet? Really, Mr. Beldon, you are extremely nervous on the subject of noise. I told you that my aunt could not move from her bed."

"Yes, I know you told me so."

"And you don't believe me?"

"I am sorry to say, dear Mrs. Brathwaite, that I do not. Not that I think you wilfully misrepresent matters, but I think you are deceived yourself. The person you think the most unlikely to have taken your money is the one who has taken it. You say that your aunt cannot get out of bed. Therefore she gets up when you can't see her. You say she would not dream of taking a penny that is not her own. She has your money without doubt."

"Can you give me a description of the person you saw?"

"I told you, a large and ponderous person, puffing and blowing, in a flowered sacque, really the most awful thing I ever beheld in the shape of woman. Her head——"

"Her head? Gray curls piled high?"

"No, you don't!" said Mr. Beldon. "Rather, dear Mrs. Brathwaite, don't try to lead me astray. Her head was as big as a pork barrel, and tied round and round with a black silk handkerchief, the end sticking out in front. It reminded me of the rabbits that Uncle Dick used to make for us on the wall when we were children."

"I must confess that you have described my aunt rather faith-

fully," said I, "but you might have heard of her from someone, the new boarder, or——"

"You forget that I have not had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of your new boarder."

"I did forget that. Well, then, Glorianna—or Baldwin Towner. Come, now, Mr. Beldon, tell me, haven't they talked to you about my aunt?"

"Well, yes, somewhat," confessed Mr. Beldon, "but really they gave me no such idea of her, I must say,—no such awful idea of her,—as that she gave me herself when she came in here last night."

"You have been dreaming," I declared,—“dreaming! Lock your door, Mr. Beldon, and don't imagine——”

Here Glorianna unceremoniously poked her head in at the door.

"The's another newspaper feller come an' he says he wants to get took in."

Mr. Beldon sprang to the door. "Say she'll come in a minute, Glory, in a minute." He pushed her out, drew me in, and this time he did lock his door most hurriedly.

"I told you," he said, speaking very fast, "that old Haight was putting them on to the case. Now promise me that you won't take him in. They have withdrawn the police from the Hall, I hear, and now the newspaper harpies are going to have their innings. Now promise me, Mrs. Brathwaite, do promise me. If you must take in a reporter, take some one not on our paper."

"I sha'n't take him," said I. "Don't you be alarmed. Nothing would tempt me to help annoy the ladies at the Hall." I then went out, and I heard him lock the door after me. He was evidently more afraid of his own editor than of all the ghosts in Christendom. I went swiftly out to the porch, and there I found a young fellow, not yet out of his teens. He had newspapers in all his pockets, and there was such an eruption of pencils everywhere that he might almost have answered to the sobriquet of "The Human Porcupine."

He bowed politely.

"Have you a room for rent?" he said.

"No," said I.

"Why, I was told in the village that I might be able to get in here. I came from the city this morning to write up a sensation, and I want to remain for two or three days."

"Well, I have no room for you," I said. "What is your paper?"

"The *Morning Scythe*," said he. At this I smiled a little, with relief at finding it not to be the *Star Union*, but I had no idea of harboring anyone who wanted to write up my own dear people at the Hall, and said only, "Well, I have no room unoccupied; besides, I never let my room for less than a week."

"Oh, the editor wouldn't mind paying a week's rent at all, I'm sure. He is very keen after this article."

"Well," said I, "I wouldn't let you have a room if I was as poverty-stricken as Job's turkey, and you offered me a hundred dollars a week. Here, Bill," I said, "see this stranger off the premises."

My old dog got up and came over to where the young man stood and began pushing against him with his great body.

"Does he bite?" asked he.

"Not unless too hard pushed," I said. "Don't push him too hard."

"I won't," said he. "That's what he's doing to me. I'll just go along and up to the Hall."

"Glorianna," I called.

"Yes'm," said Glorianna.

"Send Baldwin here."

"Oh, I'm going, ma'am," said the young stranger.

"Yes," said I, "you are."

"I'm going right on up to the Hall."

"No," said I, "you're not."

Here Baldy Towner appeared.

"Baldwin," said I, "this young man, hardly more than a lad, wants to go up and annoy the ladies. You and Bill see that he doesn't," and I sat down as Baldy Towner came round the house.

The young man walked down the steps quickly and out to the gate.

"You can't mount that there bike until ye've walked down the road a bit," said Baldy Towner; "in fact, I don't know as ye'd better mount at all." Whereupon he took an awl from his pocket and gave the tire a jab; there was a great rush of air, and the punctured rubber collapsed.

"How dare you!" said the lad. "That is an indictable offence. I'll have you up in court. I'll——"

"You kin do anything but go up to the Hall; thet ye can't."

Bill stood where Baldy ordered him to stand, in the middle of the road leading up to the Hall, ready to spring if Baldy gave the word, and so the young man started to walk back to the village, pushing his useless bicycle in front of him along the way that he had come. I saw that he was passed by another man, who was driving in one of the regular buggy-hacks that take visitors out to the country places round Galtersburg. The buggy stopped right in front of our door.

"Is that another of those reporters, Charlie?" I called to the man. He was a driver for our one livery stable. We had been to the village school together in our childhood.

"I dono'm," said Charlie. "He said he wanted a nice place to board, and I thought I'd bring him out to your house."

"I never saw anything like the number of people wanting board just now," said I. "I might make money if I owned a hotel. No, I haven't any place for you," for I saw that his pockets too were fairly bulging out with papers and pads and pencils.

By this time the man was close to the steps.

"What paper are you from?" said I.

"How did you know? Oh, my materials, I suppose. Well, then, the *Star Union*."

"I wouldn't take a man from the *Star Union* for his weight in gold," said I.

"What's the matter with the *Star Union*?" he asked. "Been saying anything about you, or anyone connect——"

"No," said I. "I never get into the papers. There is no reason why I should, but I don't want to take newspaper reporters. I have an invalid aunt——"

"I should like to interview her——" He took a pad from his pocket.

"We have a ghost in the house, and——"

"I'll write it up——" He drew a pencil from another pocket.

"I have a strange young woman, a trained nurse, in my lower front, and——"

"She might give me an article on the system of training nurses——"

"——And a news—but no! I won't take you."

"What were you going to say about a newspaper man?"

"I was going to say that a newspaper never knows enough to mind its own business, and I, for one, will have nothing to do with them."

"Then I'll go on to the Hall," said the stranger, turning towards the buggy.

"Charlie Blount," I called, "if you let that man go to the Hall, you and I are friends no longer. You know what the ladies wish. Do it, and don't let strangers come meddling in Galtersville."

Charlie Blount looked uncertainly at me. Then he turned to the stranger.

"I don't know as I can take you," said he. "Ef the ladies don't want it, nuff said."

"Then I'll walk."

"Not ef Bill knows it," said Baldy Towner. "Here, Bill."

"Well, I'm blessed! Deprive a man of his liberty on the high-road in this free country? I'll see what the law says to that," and the stranger got slowly into the carriage to drive back to the village with Charlie Blount.

He had not more than taken his seat in the buggy before Miss Dacres dashed down the hill from the direction of the Hall, rode up to the side of the fence, jumped lightly off in that way that experts

have, and leaned her wheel against the elm-tree. She stood looking inquiringly at the two men.

"What do they want?" she said.

"One's a newspaper man," I replied. "He wants to interview the ladies up at the Hall, but as far as I can, I shall prevent it."

"Perhaps I'll let you interview *me* some day," said Miss Dacres, smiling at the stranger.

"You're not what I'm after," said the man as they drove off.

"Well," said Miss Dacres, "I'm glad I'm not what he's after," and came in at the gate.

"Please do not walk on the grass," I called. "Just since you have been here it's getting dreadfully worn."

"Am I the only one?" asked Miss Dacres.

"Yes," said I, "you are, or no—" and then I recalled the fact that Mr. Beldon always walked on the grass also. "I must speak to him about it," said I.

"To whom?" asked Miss Dacres.

"Have you a room for rent?"

The question was getting monotonous. I turned quickly at these words. This latest applicant for a room at my house seemed to have risen out of the ground. He began to cough as soon as he had spoken, and coughed violently for a minute or so. He was a weak old man, a clergyman, apparently. When he had finished his paroxysm he came nearer. "I have had a bad attack of grippe," said he. "I am from the West. I was travelling to Washington to see about a pension to which I am entitled, for, you must know, I served in the late war."

"Come right in," said I, "and rest yourself."

He came slowly into the yard and walked haltingly up the gravel path. That pleased me, his not walking on the grass, and I made up my mind that if he was willing to take the little room over Mr. Beldon's and back of Aunt Jane Mary's, I would take him in. At this rate it would not be long before I should be able to repay Miss Dacres what I owed her and send her off. But stay! Did I wish to send her off? Her blue eyes—her light curly hair—her name—Amaranthe!

We walked to the steps together, the old gentleman and I. I really wanted to assist him, but was afraid of hurting his feelings, so I went slowly up to the piazza floor and sat down. He had halted half way to cough again, and as he seized upon the rail I thought that he would strangle.

Finally he recovered, wiped his eyes, and came to where I sat. I arose hastily and drew a chair forward, into which he sank with a grateful nod. He wore a frock coat of shabby black and a turned-down white collar, what we used to call a Byron collar. He had bushy eyebrows, and thin side whiskers, and long, thin, iron-gray hair.

Mysterious Miss Dacres

"How queer for you to find this quiet little place," said I.

"I came to see your college. You have a very fine one," he replied. "The President is an old friend of mine. In fact, we were college chums, and shouldered muskets in the old Ninety-second New York side by side. I have been at his house to-day, and when he saw how worn out I was with this cough, he advised me to rest awhile before going to Washington. He recommended me to you." He then fumbled in his pocket and brought out a letter, which he handed me. I knew the writing well. I opened it. It ran:

"DEAR MRS. BRATHWAITE: You will do all good people a favor if you will take in my old friend, Dr. Wynne, for a little stay. He ought not to travel at present, and I think your neighborhood is exactly the one for him just now. I shall come out to see him soon; meantime do what you can for him, and thus place me only the deeper in your debt as a friend, and

"Believe me, yours faithfully,

"As ever,

"MARMADUKE SMITH."

Now Marmaduke Smith and I had studied our geography in the same class at the village school, Marmaduke at the head, Charlie Blount at the foot, and I half way between, and there had been a time—well, I won't go into that, but I felt that if Marmaduke wanted anything, and I could procure it for him, I was bound to do so.

"Do you think you can go upstairs?" I asked. "My other rooms are all taken."

"Front or back?" said he in his quavering voice.

"Well, I'm sorry to say that my aunt has the upper front, and I have the room across the hall from hers. There is only a small room left, back of my aunt's."

"Have you other boarders in the house?"

"Yes, a lady and a gentleman. They are strangers to each other. The lady is in the front, and the gentleman at the back. I could give you a small room over his—the gentleman's, I mean."

"That will do capitally," said Dr. Wynne.

"Or I could change into the little back room myself," said I, "and give you mine; it wouldn't be much trouble. The front is pleasanter, and——"

"Not for the world," cried out the old gentleman, "not for the——" and then he began to cough again until the tears rained down his cheeks. "I will take the back room with the greatest pleasure," said he when he could speak. "When can I come?"

"At once," said I. "Have you a trunk?"

"Oh, yes, we arranged that. If I did not return by four o'clock,

Dr. Smith was to send it out. You know he boards in the village, but he thought the dust of Main Street would irritate my lungs. It seems all very sweet and peaceful out here."

I settled Dr. Wynne in the little room over Mr. Beldon's, and came down to find my Lower-Back in the hall.

"You've taken a new boarder," said he, "after all your promises."

"He is not a newspaper man. I promised not to take newspaper men. You really must know that I cannot be bound to take no one while you are here. In that case, you had better engage the entire house."

He muttered something which sounded like "that would have been better," and then spoke aloud. "How is it possible for me, a poor reporter, to take a whole house like this? Of course I can't. What is this new man like?"

"He is an old clergyman," said I. "He is highly recommended by my old friend, President Marmaduke Smith, of the Galtersville College. He is from way out West somewhere, I don't know where. But how did you know that I had taken anyone?"

"How do I know? I'm sure I can't tell you. It's in the air, I suppose, as you said this morning. You are sure he is just a clergyman?"

"One look at the poor old man is enough," said I. "Why, what did you think he was?"

"Well, I—I—thought it might be old Haight himself perhaps, come out here to track out the mystery up at the Hall. But, of course, he would make no secret of who he is, and he wouldn't tell a lie, not to get the whole scoop. What peculiar superstition does your friend affect?"

"If you mean what church he belongs to," I said stiffly, for I did not at all like the lightness of his tone in speaking of religious matters, "I think he is a Baptist. He said something about bathing, called it immersion, this morning. Poor old gentleman! I'm afraid he's not long for this life."

"Well," said my Lower-Back, shrugging his shoulders, "I suppose I'll have to put up with him, but I want to say just this, if he makes a noise overhead, or roams round at night like your aunt, you can count me out."

"I'm very sorry," said I, "but my poor aunt cannot walk one step. How you do harry me. You are so fanciful. I really have no one to help me, and nowhere to turn. I must make all the income I can at present, and I don't want you to ask me why."

"Very well, enough said," and Mr. Beldon went into his room and closed the door. This time he locked it, as I had advised, and I saw nothing more of him that day.

Meanwhile, whenever I could get an opportunity, I stole one of

Miss Dacres's letters, and as I did so I replaced it with the one that I had just copied. I read them with deep interest, and spent a great deal of time over them in my own room, so much so that Aunt Jane Mary complained that she was left entirely to Glorianna.

One day when Miss Dacres had gone off on one of her lengthy rides, and I had been up to call on the ladies, I returned to find her door open and Glorianna standing within the opening. She was beckoning silently with a quick, sharp crook of the finger.

"Glorianna," said I, "Miss Dacres allows no one in her room but me."

"That's why I come," said Glorianna. "You be'n fooled long enough."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

Glorianna closed the door gently and then crossed the floor. She flung a towel over the keyhole of the communicating door, and led the way to the door of the cellar. This I saw that she had already unbolted; she began to descend the stairs.

"Come back, Glorianna," said I, "come back!" in as loud a whisper as I dared give voice to. "You know I told her that no one should enter her room but myself, and going into the cellar was a very particular part of the promise. Come up, do you hear? Come up!"

Glorianna stood half-way down the steps looking up at me.

"You wait," she replied. "Ye don't deserve no garden angel, but ye gut to hev one all the same. Whut d'ye think o' thet?" She reached out to a beam which supported the flooring and unhooked something from it. "There!" she exclaimed. "Wuz ye took in, or wuzn't ye?"

My eyes fell upon a coat, waistcoat, and trousers; indeed, there were two pairs, one made as knee breeches, and the other pair the long coverings of a young man of fashion. "An' I'll bet ye'll find the counterpa'ts of 'em in them boory draw's," said Glorianna.

"Perhaps it's a bicycle suit," said I. "She may like to ride so in the evening. They tell me that in Paris the women look almost like men. I know she's lived abroad." I stopped short. This knowledge I had gained from the letters; I must not divulge it too soon.

"An' whut say to this?" and Glorianna began to remove from the coat-pockets some cigarette stumps, and those little books that I have seen young men take out and tear up to roll their tobacco in.

"Well, it's all the same thing. She acknowledged that she smoked. I spoke to her about it. Many women do it. It's considered a rather stylish accomplishment, I believe. She may smoke and wear boy's clothes to ride in, and still be a young woman. Don't you think so, Glory?"

"And whut do ye say to this?" asked Glorianna, ignoring my humble

plea. She had pulled a letter from one of the pockets, and was holding it to the light.

"'Dear Jim,'" she began. "'Isn't it about time we got on to somethin'?" "

"Stop! Glorianna," said I, "this is really too much! She could have you arrested for that."

"Oh Lordy!" said Glorianna as she dropped the letter and skipped up the remaining steps.

"Now go right back," said I, "and place those things exactly as you found them. She told me about her brother Jim, and about his being dead. These are evidently his clothes, and we have been laying bare her dearest secrets. Come! Hang them up quickly, and come out of the cellar."

"Yes'm," said Glorianna Towner meekly.

"Now don't ever let me hear of your going into that cellar again through this room," said I, emboldened by the change of front.

"No'm," said Glorianna. "I wun't, fer I'm a-goin' home this noon."

Thus was my soul torn with constant warnings from Glorianna, with constant anxieties about money matters, and, I must say, with constant suspicions about my Lower-Front. It was dreadfully wearing, and I was relieved in mind when Aunt Jane Mary began to thump. Glorianna did not go at noon, nor for many noons after that. I think now that she was quite conscious when she was well off, but at the time I feared her departure with every day that dawned, and I was in dreadful bondage to her, to Baldwin Towner through her, to my Lower-Front, and not the least to Aunt Jane Mary. My Lower-Back did not worry me at all, and my Upper-Back, Dr. Wynne, was a delight and a joy. His cough began to desert him now, and he grew steadily better. Marmaduke Smith came out to see him every day or two, and they often walked in the flower garden of an afternoon, or sat in the arbor conversing in low tones. He said it was about the college taking his volumes on the "The Lost Tribes" as a text-book. I knew that President Smith would help him out if he could. He said that if that were settled, he would go on to Washington at once, but that Marmaduke must apply to the trustees, and that couldn't be until the next Monday.

Sometimes they came in and sat on the piazza as the sun was setting, and their talk was always of books and the higher education, until I really got rather tired of having so much learning about me. Sometimes it happened that Miss Dacres would come home while they were sitting there. She never seemed to like it, and usually she rode on, and came back when President Smith had left and Dr. Wynne had gone upstairs. If they were still there when she came past the second time, she would go on again, or else stand her wheel against the tree,

open the gate, and walk swiftly round the house. I told her once that it wouldn't do any harm to be introduced to two of the most learned men of modern times, but she always replied that she had come for rest, and not for education, and she meant to get it if possible. Why she should know these people just because I did she could not see. Americans, she said, were always crazy to introduce people who didn't want to know each other.

V.

AND now, it seems to me, begins the most interesting part of my story, the beginning of the end. One day the ladies, ever thoughtful, had sent the carriage down to see if I would not like to go for an airing. It was quite late in the afternoon, but I had told them that it was the only time when I could possibly accept their kind offer, as then my daily round had been accomplished. It was tiresome to drive alone, but Miss Elizabeth had a severe headache, and Miss Evelyn could not leave her.

I first knocked at the door of my Lower-Front to see if she would not like to take the vacant seat. In truth, it came into my mind that perhaps in the close companionship that a long drive brings about she might be willing to say a little more about herself, and I was anxious to learn what there was to tell before I began to suggest anything to the ladies. I knocked, but no voice responded; I opened her door a little way, but the room was empty. I almost wished that I could bundle up Aunt Jane Mary and take her out with me. Then suddenly I bethought me of Dr. Wynne. I ran up to his room and knocked. He came slowly to the door, as became an old and weak man, and my heart reproached me that I had not thought of him at first.

"Dr. Wynne," said I, "will you take a drive with me? I won't say a little drive, because I shall stay out just as long as I can."

"Let me see," said Dr. Wynne, smiling and showing his fine teeth. I always wondered to see them so white and firm! "Isn't this my day for President Smith?" He went to his table and fumbled with a calendar with the trembling uncertainty that is so pitiful in old age.

"Ah," he said, "here it is. No, he does not come to-day. Yes, I am at liberty to go with you. I shall enjoy it very much. Can you show me the old Swedes' Meeting-House? I have always wanted to see it."

"Certainly," said I. "Our road lies that way."

"That pleases me very much," said Dr. or Elder Wynne, as he preferred to be called. He came slowly down the stairs and out through the garden and climbed into the great, roomy carriage. I covered his thin old knees with the lap-robe and we were off.

"Where to M'?" said old John.

"Along the Winchester Road and through the Overly Lane to the

Swedes' Meeting-House." John touched his hat, and we sped swiftly along. The day was balmy and we had the windows down, but Elder Wynne kept pulling up the lap-robe when it slipped away.

We drove several miles and then turned into the Overly Lane. Here the young trees, which were just bursting into earliest bud, met overhead. I felt sure that the woods must hold for me some treasures in the shape of woodland flowers.

"Would you mind, Dr. Wynne, if I were to get out a moment to search for flowers?"

"No," said he, "not at all." I went through an opening in the fence and along by the stream. There were little patches of snow still lying in the shaded spots, and I realized that there could be no flowers, that I had come to the wrong place; then I turned to retrace my path, when just under a great tree upon a flat stone I saw something lying. I picked it up. It was Miss Dacres's pocket-book. I had seen it in her hands several times. I put it in my pocket, and quite forgot it as I continued my search for flowers. There was nothing to reward me, and I returned to the carriage.

Elder Wynne was quavering about the Lost Tribes (and I can truthfully say that I wished many a time that day that he had never found them) when John drew up at the door of the church. The stone step was but a few paces away from the road, and I alighted and helped the old man down. I was wondering if I should have to go on to Maltby's, the sexton of the new meeting-house, and get the key, when I saw that the door was open a little crack. I pushed it, and it gave at my touch. I walked into the semi-darkness, holding to Elder Wynne's hand that he might not stumble, and together we entered the vestibule of the church, and then I pushed on to the main door. This too I thrust open, and then we stood in the central aisle of the old stone building.

"Hist!" The sound came out of the darkness.

"Who is that?" said I.

"Maltby, is that you?" I heard. "We've—I've seen enough. It's a very interesting old——" By this time the speaker was close to me, and we recognized each other at the same moment.

"Oh Mrs. Brathwaite! Is that you? What a queer place to meet you in." He spoke in a very loud tone of voice.

"Softly, sir, softly! You are in the Lord's House," said Elder Wynne in his soft, quavering tones.

"I beg your pardon, I was so surprised! There's nothing to see,—nothing, I assure you. I've been all over the old ram-shackle affair—there is really nothing." He stood in the middle of the aisle. His so standing blocked our way.

"What! Not the carving of the Resurrection and the font given

by the first Swede pastor? Why, where were your eyes, Mr. Beldon? We must see those, of course. Come, Dr. Wynne."

My Lower-Back backed slowly down the dark aisle, talking volubly to us and occasionally glancing over his shoulder. The church was dimly lighted, and I suggested having one of the windows opened,—the blinds, rather. "I will go in the carriage and get the sexton," said I.

"I think we can send for him more easily," said Mr. Beldon. "Hi, Johnny!" and there appeared out of the darkness the little deformed child whom I had often seen playing round the door of the Maltby homestead. "Go and tell your father that Mrs. Brathwaite wishes the blinds opened."

"He's gone to the village," replied Johnny, "but if you and the lady had enough of light——"

"The lady says she cannot see," said Mr. Beldon, breaking in, "however——"

"I mean the other lady," said Johnny.

"Go! go at once, Johnny," broke in Mr. Beldon, "and see if he hasn't come home yet." There was a sudden gleam of outer sunshine as Johnny ran through the door, and by its ray I perceived a handkerchief on the cushioned seat near where I was standing. I picked it up at once. It had a variegated border which I knew well.

"Thank you," said Mr. Beldon, holding out his hand.

"It isn't yours," said I. "It belongs to my young woman boarder, Miss Dacres."

"Does it?" said Mr. Beldon, clapping his hand to his pocket. "Where, then, can I have left mine? Does that young woman penetrate even to the temple of the Lord. Is nothing sacred from her, not even this holy edifice?"

I did not like his tone, and Elder Wynne looked at him as if it jarred upon him.

"Young man," he said in his quavering voice, "when you come to my age you will not speak slightly of a pile like this, or of its Master."

"I don't call that slightly, sir," said Mr. Beldon respectfully. "I really am surprised at that young woman. I meet her everywhere on the road. She pries into everything, but she seems no more willing to make my acquaintance than I am to make hers. I wonder if she was here lately."

Elder Wynne began to cough.

"The church is damp," I said. "Oh, dear! How reproached I shall be if you have taken more cold. Do come out into the sunshine."

"The church is not really cold," said Mr. Beldon. "Let me see

if I cannot open the blind without waiting for Maltby. It would be a pity, after you have come so far, not to——"

It came over me just then that he had declared that the church held nothing of interest.

"No! no!" said Dr. Wynne, hurrying towards the door much faster than I had thought possible he could, "I cannot stay here longer. I must get out, out into the air."

His tone frightened me, and I hurried after him. I never saw him show so much vigor. He was standing on the church step when I came through the door, and was shading his eyes with his hand and looking down the road. My eyes followed his. "Who is that?" He indicated a flying figure silhouetted against the setting sun.

"That?" said I. "That? Why, it looks very much like my other boarder, Miss Dacres." Mr. Beldon looked after the diminishing figure. "I believe you are right," said he. "That is Miss Dacres. I wonder where she came from?"

When we reached home I found Miss Dacres sitting on the piazza.

"Where have you been?" she said. "I am starving. I have been home for hours."

"Not quite hours," said I, "if that was you we saw spinning along Overly Lane."

"Well, that may be an exaggeration; but what made you think I was in Overly Lane?"

"I saw you. We all saw you. Mr. Beldon said it was you."

"Was he with you?" she asked.

"No, we met him in the church, the Swedes' Church."

At this she began to laugh. "Oh, that Swedes' Church!" she said, "that Swedes' Church!"

"Here is something that I found there, something of yours."

"Not mine!"

"Oh, yes, yours. Glorianna has ironed it too often for me not to know it."

She held out her hand and took the handkerchief. "So it is," said she. "Where do you say you found it?"

"In the Swedes' Church—on the seat of one of the pews."

Elder Wynne was seated in a chair near by. He had taken up the evening paper, which concealed his face, and was looking apparently at the first page, but he did not turn it, nor make the rustling that newspaper readers usually do.

"Come into my room," said Miss Dacres suddenly, "I want to tell you something."

I entered the hall, then her room. When we were inside she closed the window which was open to the piazza and the door into the hall.

"Now I'm going to make a clean breast of it," said she. "I was

in the Swedes' Church, and this is my handkerchief. Now you sit there, and let me sit here; or wait, no, let me get down here." To my great surprise, Miss Dacres placed me in a rocking-chair and seated herself on a little stool at my feet. "There! we're all comfortable so. Now let me rise to explain. I did go into the Swedes' Church." She laid her head against my knee confidently. She looked up into my face with those lovely eyes. Why had I never seen before how lovely they were? "I was out on my wheel this afternoon, when I came across that queer old church. I had never seen it before. I jumped off and went up to the door. To my surprise, I found it open a crack, and I went in. The inside was so dark that at first I could hardly feel my way, but I went down the middle aisle and stood by that queer old tomb. It gave me a sort of shivery feeling, and I was glad to hear voices overhead. They were a man's voice and a child's. Their owners were coming down from the belfry, I thought, for they seemed to be in the front of the church. I was foolish not to run right out of the building. I had plenty of time, but I got dazed. I thought they would be going in a moment, and that I could hide until they were gone. And how foolish that would have been! Just think, if I had stayed there, and been locked up alone!" Miss Dacres gave a little shudder, and laid her head in the folds of my gown. Unconsciously, almost, I smoothed her boyish, yellow hair, and in my heart I was crying out, "Have I found you, little Amaranthe?"

"Well, when you——"

"Well, I crouched down behind the front pew and waited. To my horror that Mr.—Mr.——"

"Beldon," I supplied.

"Yes, Beldon—Mr. Beldon—came in from the vestibule and down that central aisle, and as he was coming the door opened again, and you came in with that tiresome old Dr. Wynne."

"My dear," said I, excusing her in my heart, because she was so like my little Amaranthe,—“my dear, don't speak so. He is a dear old gentleman. Highly recommended by President Smith, of the Galtersville College.”

"Well, if he bored me with the Lost Tribes as he bores you, I'd get rid of him mighty sud—I mean as soon as possible. But to go on, where was I? Oh, yes, I crouched down behind the front pew and that man, Beldon, I think you said, came down the aisle. Then you came in and I heard you all talking. I then felt sure from the sound of your voices that you were coming along to the chancel, so I simply crawled round the corner, up the side aisle, and while you were still talking with that officious man in the back room I was out of the door and off. Johnny opened the door for himself, so that I could get out without it being very apparent."

"I don't see why you hid," said I.

"Why, from Mr. Beldon. I told you I was averse to meeting him. I don't like his looks at all. I won't know him—simply won't! I never saw many old churches," continued Miss Dacres musingly. "Out in India they are mostly temples, and such things, but——"

"So you have been in India," I said. "You have travelled a great deal for so young a——"

"Did I say India, really? How careless I am. I didn't mean to tell you now. Perhaps I will sometime, all about it. In our Wisconsin home we hadn't, of course, any old churches, and after mother died father took me abroad with him."

"When you came here you said that your mother was in town,—in the city, I mean,—and that your brother brought out your slippers."

"Yes, you dear old thing," said she, stroking my knees with her thin brown hand, "I know I did. I was so afraid that you would turn me adrift, and I had really nowhere to go. I said I was married too, at least I spoke of my little chap at school! No such good luck for me. Can you forgive me?"

"Poor child!" As I spoke a tear dropped from my eye upon her yellow curls.

"Don't cry," she said. "Don't cry for me." She got up on her knees and stroked my cheeks. "It may be better some day." She winked very hard and bit her lip. "I really haven't any mother. That is just a good woman who took me in, but her married daughter came home with two children and I had to leave. I could send you to her any time. She would tell you the same. And that man,—well, his name was Waldemar, but he wasn't my brother. I am going to confess all about it. He is that kind woman's daughter's husband. She sent him out here with my slippers. They are plain people, and queer sort of people, but I'd trust them as I would myself. I knew you would not like it, and, in fact, I didn't like it any too well myself. What do you think he did? He threw gravel against my windows. Now, did you ever hear of such a thing?—calling a respectable girl in that way? Did you hear anything?"

"I didn't hear the gravel," said I.

"Then I needn't have told you," she laughed. "I was so ashamed when you discovered it, I wrote to his mother that when she had anything more to send or any message, or anything, she must send her son out in the daytime; but he is employed in an automobile factory, as I told you,—that is all true,—and he can't very well get away in the day."

I started, for just here I thought I heard a faint rumbling sound beneath the place where we were sitting. "What is that noise?" I exclaimed.

"Noise? I don't hear any."

"Yes, underneath us, in the cellar. It sounds like a rumbling."

"Dear me! Dear me!" she jumped up from the floor and began to scream nervously. "Perhaps we're going to have an earthquake. We had one out in——" She ran to the cellar-door, making a great deal of noise as she went, and flung it wide. "Is there anyone there?" she called. "Come and listen for yourself, Mrs. Brathwaite. Come and listen for yourself." The rumbling had ceased.

"I certainly heard a noise," said I.

"Well, you ought to know your own cellar. You will make me afraid to sleep here if you say such things."

"Let us go down and see," I suggested.

She hesitated, and then said, "Well, if you wish, but it's very draughty. O-o-o-h! I'm shivering already."

Now, I had the beginning of a cold, caught suddenly, I feared, in the old church, and for that reason I hesitated also to go down into that gloomy vault. I did, however, push myself a little way down, and then, as if I had seen them for the first time, "Why! what is this?" said I, and I reached out my hand and took from the wall the suit of men's clothes.

At this my boarder seated herself upon the top step, put her hands over her face, and burst into tears.

"They're Jim's," she said. "They're Jim's."

"Don't, my dear, don't. Do not agitate yourself so terribly."

She shook all over her spare form. Her voice came muffled from between her fingers. There was no doubt about her grief being serious. "It seems as if I were suspected and hounded every step I take. I'm sure I have only good intentions. I have no wish to do anything wrong, but, dear Mrs. Brathwaite, just remember that I have had no mother. You know what that means to a girl—no mother! Poor Jim! It might not have happened if she had not died and left us. Jim's clothes are all that I have left of him, and I kept them. I could not bear to give them away. I have heard of women being blamed for not giving away their baby's clothes, after they died, to poor people. I feel as if Jim had been my baby, my dead baby. Jim! dear, dear Jim!" Her tears were very honest tears.

I came to the top step and gathered the girl in my arms. "There! don't cry," said I. "Don't cry."

"Stop, dear lady," said she, brushing away her tears hurriedly, "I must hang up poor Jim's clothes again. I didn't think you'd mind. I hung them there to keep them free from moths." I wanted to take her in my arms and say "Little Amaranthe, little Amaranthe." She looked so thin and helpless and woe-begone. She hung the clothes upon their nail with many a sigh and heave of the breast. Her sor-

row was so real that my heart ached for her. I went back into the room, and in a moment she joined me. "How good you are to me," she said. My own eyes were brimming as I put my hands on her shoulders and looked into hers, and I said it:

"Little Amaranthe! little Amaranthe!"

"What do you mean?" said she suddenly, the color flushing her cheeks. She stared at me like one seeing an apparition.

"Ah, little Amaranthe, you don't remember me. You don't remember Wibby, who used to teach you when you were a little tot."

She put her hand to her head. "Say that again," said she.

"Wibby, Wibby, who used to teach you."

"Let me think," said she. "Let me think. I seem to see—oh! was it a great white house? Was there a riotously lovely garden? Did we do lessons out under a tree? Was there a great dog, and a cow that I used to fondle? Were there two ladies there, and a little one, who always came with the books——"

"Yes, yes," whispered I, as my tears streamed fast. "It was like that. What you say is proof enough for me. I am the Sophronia Willoughby who used to teach you, my dear, dearest little girl."

"So you are Wibby?" she said. "Is it a wonder that I did not know you? How you have changed."

"Yes," said I, with a sigh. "I have indeed changed. How could I help it in sixteen years? Do you remember your aunts?"

"Yes," said she. "They were my aunts, were they not, those two ladies? Then there was mother and an uncle. Was his name——"

"David," said I. "Don't you remember your Uncle David, David Darlington?"

"Was it David?" she asked. "Was it my Uncle David? I knew that my name was Darlington. It was the name we had in Madras. After father died I had to do something. Father died very poor."

"But how was that?" I asked. "He was a rich man."

"I don't like to say things against dear daddy," she laughed,—a sad little laugh,—"but to tell you the truth, Mrs. Brathwaite dear, father was a confirmed gambler. He died when I was fifteen years old, and I have been supporting myself ever since."

"With the great house standing up there on the hill," I cried, "and enough and to spare."

"Are those my Darlingtons?" she asked in an awe-struck voice. "Are those my people? I cannot believe it. Oh, to be at home at last! Not to have to work any more, to be taken care of!" and she burst into hysterical tears.

"And why did you never write?"

"I did write after father died, but I never received any answer. Then the Consul wrote, but he was unsuccessful also. I thought that

they must all have died. Father had told me that he had taken all that belonged to him, and I felt that I had no rights, that perhaps they did not want me, would not welcome me."

"Why did you change your name?" I cried,— "oh, why?"

"Oh, to Dacres? If you had known my father."

"You forget, my dear, I did know your father."

"Very well, then, you know how he hated the idea of one of his family working for a living. He had very grand ideas, had daddy. He said often and often that no one of the Darlington family should ever disgrace his name or him by working for a living."

"Yes," said I, "those were exactly Eugene Darlington's ideas. I have heard him express himself in that way fifty times or more."

"But what was I to do? I had no friends—no one to take care of me. I went first to England with an English family as nursery governess. When I left them I went into an English hospital. I learned to be a trained nurse. I took the name of Dacres. It came into my head, I don't know how. Father had been persistent about the honor of his name, and here I am, as Josephine Dacres, at your service."

"Josephine Amaranthe Dacres," I corrected her.

"Yes, Josephine Amaranthe, but not Dacres—Darlington at last, thank God!"

As I lay thinking of it all, after I was in bed, I remembered that I had not asked how she came to have a brother. I had never heard of any son having been born to Eugene Darlington. I must ask her about it in the morning.

And now it seemed to me that the time had come when I should take the ladies into my confidence. I began a series of visits to them.

Each time that I went to the Hall I took with me a copy of a letter, the words traced in the hand of Miss Elizabeth, Miss Evelyn, or their dead brother David. How Miss Elizabeth wept over them, and how sweet Miss Evelyn sobbed over them, until the ink in which I had copied them was faded and blurred with their reminiscent tears.

And now the summer flowers were bursting into bloom. The country was, I thought, at its best. Everything gave promise of a delightful season. It was the latter part of June, about a week, perhaps, after my interview with Miss Dacres, that there came a sudden change from warm to hot weather. My room was not under the attic, which acted as an air-chamber, and it became so heated that one would have thought it was midsummer.

On the hottest night of all, I lay on my bed fanning myself and trying to fall into a doze. It was useless, and remembering the cool horsehair of our old sofa in the parlor, I got up, opened my door

very gently, so as not to disturb Aunt Jane Mary, and went down the stairs. The parlor-door was open, and I slipped into the room. There was enough of glimmer from the moon to show me my way. I groped past the table to the sofa. Ah, how invitingly cool its old-fashioned surface was! I lay down under the window fanning myself for a half hour or so, and finally awoke to the fact that I was growing, not cool, but chilly. I was just about to get up and take a shawl from the hall hat-rack when I heard a step upon the piazza. Now, the window was open, and I felt sure that in another moment some midnight marauder would be crawling over me and into the room. I was terribly frightened. He might show a dark lantern at any instant. Then what would be my fate? I slid softly from the sofa and crept to the inner side of the room, to the recess behind the organ, which stood across the corner. Here I crouched and waited.

"Jo!" I heard, "Jo!" and then in a little louder tone, "Jo, are you here?" Then a light streamed into the room. There was a grunt of annoyance on account, I knew, of the discovered nature of the room, and the light was withdrawn. I heard the footsteps go along the piazza and past the hall-door. I hardly knew what to do. I thought of running to Mr. Beldon's room and knocking on the door, and then I remembered suddenly that which I was always forgetting, that he spent his nights at the newspaper office. There was no one to protect us but an old and feeble man upstairs, locked into his room, difficult to awaken perhaps, or Baldy Towner, who was sound asleep over the stable. To reach him I must unlock the back-door and cross the open yard. I might meet this midnight prowler anywhere outside of the house.

As I listened, I heard a tapping on the window farther along the piazza. He was not trying the front-door, then? I crept out from my place of concealment, and, kneeling on the sofa, I leaned out of the window as far as I could and watched. Then I heard a second tapping, and after a few minutes the window was gently raised. There was a short conversation, and the figure disappeared within the opening. I leaned out as far as I could, wondering where Bill could be. He had always slept with one eye open just in front of the hall-door, and no one could so much as lay a finger on the gate-latch without his deep growl sounding in my ear. I strained my eyes; Bill certainly was not there.

Bill, dear old Bill! They knew your faithfulness, but they also knew your greediness, as the following morning showed me, when Baldy Towner, with real tears in his eyes, came and beckoned me to the back-door. There lay my dear old dog, stiff and cold, a meat-bone stained with green powder lying near, proof of his too trusting nature.

I crept out through the dark hall, and going close to Miss Dacres's

door, put my ear to the keyhole and listened. I heard voices talking, though hardly above a whisper; there were more than two; it seemed to me that I heard three, but so nervous had I become that I could not place them or say if I had ever heard them before. Sometimes I thought that one of them sounded like Mr. Beldon's. I fancied that I heard Miss Dacres's soft tones, and my heart sank like lead! Perhaps, though, she was pleading for her life. Of course, I knew that Mr. Beldon could not be there, that he was away in the city, working over his articles for the next day's paper. Then I heard a movement within, and a door was unbolted and a light streamed from under the door of Mr. Beldon's room. So this was the way in which Miss Dacres disposed of her midnight visitors! Such was my sudden change of mind. She used Mr. Beldon's room while he was away!

I started up and went swiftly to the door of my Lower-Back. As I reached it, I saw that a figure was there before me. It came suddenly upon my sight. It stood on the farther side of the door and leaned down with its ear to the keyhole. As I came close, it raised its head, and at the same time clasped my wrist with a wiry grip of iron.

"Hush!" he whispered. "Don't move! Don't speak! Don't breathe!" It was Elder Wynne. I was struck with amaze. He drew me under the protecting enclosure of the back stairs and whispered:

"Go upstairs to your room; I can attend to this matter alone. Leave me to handle it." I saw now that the old man possessed more vigor than I had thought possible.

"But I am afraid," I whispered, "afraid to leave you. What do you think it is? Do you think she has got into the hands of some house-breakers? Oh, if Mr. Beldon were only here! You are so old, so frail. Those men might murder you. Let me stay in the dining-room, that I may be within call."

Elder Wynne laughed, a silent sort of laugh.

"We have no time now," he whispered, "to explain matters. Do as I tell you; go upstairs quickly. Leave this matter to me." At the same time he threw back the lapel of his cotton dressing-gown, and flashed forth a little gleam of light from somewhere which struck full upon the shining shield bearing the badge of the detective force. We heard a movement within the room, then a hand was laid upon the knob.

"Run," he whispered. "Run to your room," and then began to cough violently, following me and calling at the same time up the stairs, "Mrs. Brathwaite! Mrs. Brathwaite!" I was only on the third step, and saw that he had lighted a match and was groping his way towards the dining-room door.

At this juncture Mr. Beldon's door was opened. "Who is that?" he called.

"It is only I, sir," said Elder Wynne. "I am searching for some sugar. My cough is so troublesome. It is too bad to wake you all up."

At this I came running from the stairs. I was surprised to see Mr. Beldon. "You at home?" said I. "Oh, I wanted to call you some time ago, if I had only known it!"

"Wanted to call me?" He looked annoyed and surprised.

Elder Wynne gave me a quick, warning glance.

"Yes—yes—I wanted to—to—call you. Elder Wynne has coughed—coughed—so—so—coughed so——"

"I have not heard Elder Wynne cough," said he, turning swiftly on the old man,—"at least not until just now."

"So persistently," I continued, "that I was—afraid—he——"

Elder Wynne was now so convulsed with his cough, that I turned to the sideboard and got out the sugar-bowl. I then went to the water-cooler and filled a glass half full of water, and dropped some lumps of sugar within it."

Mr. Beldon watched me narrowly. "Has anything alarmed you, Mrs. Brathwaite? You seemed so upset just now, so——"

"Oh, no," said I. "I never felt safer nor more courageous than I have for the last few moments."

"Finding you in the house, my dear sir," said Elder Wynne, between his attacks of coughing; "finding that a gentleman was here who would be certain to protect a lady, and go for help if it were needed, is what has made Mrs. Brathwaite feel so secure."

At this moment another door was opened and someone came into the hall. We all three stepped hurriedly out from the dining-room to find Miss Dacres standing there in a wrapper. She staggered and seemed dazed. She brought a peculiar chemical odor with her.

"What on earth is all this noise?" said she. "Do you call this a quiet house? I have not been able to sleep a wink, at least since I was waked up about an hour ago by your gabbling. I shall leave to-morrow. Oh! Oh! I feel so dizzy." She clutched at the stair-rail and dropped her candle on the matting.

"I think——" I began, I was about to add—"you will," when Elder Wynne stopped me by a glance. I saw now that I had better keep quiet and leave matters to him.

"Is it this gentleman who has the back room who is making all this disturbance?" she continued. "You told me, you remember, when I came here that he never was at home at night, that——"

Here Mr. Beldon stepped forward and bowed. "I am glad at last to meet this young lady face to face," said he. "Will you introduce me to her, Mrs. Brathwaite?"

"A strange place and time," I remarked.

"I do not wish to know you, sir," answered Miss Dacres freezingly.

"You have annoyed me ever since I have been here, and if there were not a very potent reason for my remaining, I should leave at day-break."

Mr. Beldon turned away, apparently much mortified. "She's a regular tartar," he whispered in my ear. "What have I done to her?"

"It was only Dr. Wynne's cough," said I, "which got me up. He has his syrup now, and will go back to bed." I took the glass from the old man and turned to go up the stairs, whereupon Miss Dacres also turned and went into her room and locked the door. Mr. Beldon followed suit as to his own chamber, and Elder Wynne and I were left facing each other.

He began to cough and wheeze as he mounted the stair, following me. As I was on the fourth step, I heard a sound in the upper hall. I looked upward, and distinctly saw the whisking away of a red wrapper. Only Aunt Jane Mary wore a red wrapper. Could Glory have come into the house to sleep and have taken my aunt's robe? That was the only solution that I could come to. What an outrage! Could such a thing be possible?

I went on to my room, and to my surprise, when I turned to close my door, I saw that Elder Wynne was close behind me. He followed me into the chamber, and saved me the trouble of closing my door. Then he straightened himself, and in a twinkling threw off all his disguises, and stood before me, an erect, wiry, clean-shaven man of, I should think, about eight and thirty. I opened my mouth to exclaim, I suppose, perhaps to scream. He raised both hands in air.

"Don't say a word," he whispered. "You know that I am all right. I came with President Smith. You can trust me."

I was certainly very much frightened. Perhaps this man was playing upon me. Perhaps he was deceiving Marmaduke Smith as well as me.

"Now be quiet," said Elder Wynne,— "perfectly quiet. I don't ask you to believe anything that I say. You can go in town and see Marmaduke Smith to-morrow morning and ask him. You will see that I speak the truth. I am a detective on the police force of the city, sent out to Galtersville in the interests of a better government. Now I will go back to my room. Go to sleep, Mrs. Brathwaite, and rest assured that I am exactly what I tell you I am. But let me give you a note of warning. Do not attempt to manage this case yourself. I will attend to it."

With these words he picked up his disguise and slipped across to his own room. I locked the door and lay down to quake until morning. I did not sleep a single wink, and at about six o'clock, pale and red-eyed, I descended the stairs. I felt wrecked in body and mind. As soon as it was time, I should send in to the village for President Smith

and make myself sure of at least one person in my household; but I was saved that trouble, for about half-after eight o'clock I saw the President himself coming out in his buggy. He drew up at my gate, hitched his horse, and came into the garden.

"Ah, how do you do, Mrs. Brathwaite? Can I see Elder Wynne?"

"Oh, I am so glad to see you!" I cried, running to meet him.

"Hush! Hush!" said Marmaduke soothingly. "Is Wynne any worse?" This he said in a louder tone. We went into the hall, and I saw that Miss Dacres's door was open as we passed. "Don't get excited."

President Smith nodded his head at me as much as to say, "Tell me that he is?"

"Yes," said I, "he had a return of his cough last night. He came down and felt about in the dark for some sugar and water. I heard him and came down. Will you go up?"

"If I may," he replied,—“if I may.”

He went upstairs and knocked on Elder Wynne's door.

"Come in," I heard the quavering old voice say, and President Smith disappeared within the door-way. After a while I heard a voice calling me. I went to the foot of the stairs, and saw President Smith leaning out of Elder Wynne's door. "Please come up, Mrs. Brathwaite," said he, "I want to give you a little advice about my old friend here."

I dragged myself up the stairs to the door of the room.

"Come in," said Elder Wynne in his weak voice.

I entered. Elder Wynne sat by the window looking at the far-away fields, green in the early sunshine. President Smith closed the door, and stood, his back against it.

"Sophronia," he said in a low tone, "my friend here seems to think that you doubt him somewhat."

"Did he send for you to tell you that?" I asked.

"Yes, he certainly did. I got his message just after eight o'clock, or as soon as the office was opened, and here I am. Stand up, Brother Wynne," said Marmaduke Smith.

Elder Wynne arose, and stood all doubled up.

"He is imposing on you," I cried. "Do you know what he is?"

"Hush, my dear lady, hush! Hush!" President Smith held up his hand, while Elder Wynne went towards the fireplace, turned back the carpet, inserted a plug whose end was covered with white plaster within a hole which his action had laid bare, and then replaced the carpet. "That's the woman of it," he said. "You must never surprise them. Now go on, but please lower your voice a little."

"Marmaduke," said I, speaking very fast, "you think that this old man is your friend."

"I know he is," said President Smith.

"You think that he comes from a Western university, that he is a minister of the gospel, that he is here about his book on the Lost Tribes, that he is going to Washington to obtain a pension, that he is a weak old man, who——"

"Who said that I believed all this?" asked President Smith calmly.

"Well, everything shows that you do. Your coming out to see him so often, your walking with him in the garden, sitting with him in the grape-arbor, talking about the Lost Tribes."

"Who said that we talked about the Lost Tribes in the arbor and the garden?"

"Well, you talk of them on the piazza till they have driven me wild. Whatever it is that you talk about, this man is deceiving you. I was reassured last evening when I saw the insignia of his office, but he may have stolen that badge, and I have come to the conclusion that he is playing a double part."

"I am conspiring to save you, Sophronia, to save you from yourself and your trusting nature. Poor Sophronia, you do indeed need a man to take care of you. Until you find one, I confide you to the care of my good friend, Bob Jennings, the crack sleuth-hound of the detective force."

I turned pale. I could not see myself, but I felt a pallor creeping over my features. I sat down, trembling.

"Don't cry, Sophronia! Don't faint! It's all right. There is a conspiracy, right here in your own house, and we are trying to save you from it, Jennings and I. We don't know just what it means, as yet, but——"

"But your untruths, Marmaduke Smith. How do you excuse those?"

"The end justifies the means," said he. "The end certainly justifies the means."

"How could you know what was happening out here? You never come near me——"

"I should like to come, Sophronia, I should like to come. I thought of you at once when Jennings said that he wanted a boarding-place near the village, and then, strange to say, I discovered that this was the very house where he wished to take up his abode. He told me the story, as far as he knows it, and I volunteered to help him. Now, let me give you one word of caution. You have stumbled upon this matter long before we intended that you should know anything about it. Now, the only thing for you to do is to act as if you knew nothing about it. Treat these people exactly as you have all along, and——"

"Oh, how can I listen to the Lost Tribes any longer?" said I,

almost crying. Truth to tell, my nerves were shaken by all that had come and gone.

"I will promise, dear Mrs. Brathwaite, to change the subject now," he said, and I went to my room and locked my door, sitting listless, far into the morning.

VI.

No one can imagine how dreadfully I felt at the turn that matters had taken. If this girl was really the little Amaranthe of my young ladyhood, and I could not doubt that she was, it seemed a terrible thing to have found her associated with strange men who could come into her windows at night. But, after all, was I certain that any strange man had come into the window at night? I thought of asking Mr. Beldon to help me, and set him as a watch upon her. The fact of the existence of that plug which Elder Wynne had cut in some way out of the floor of my upper back did not escape my mind. That, of course, was to keep a watch upon Mr. Beldon, but I thought that Elder Wynne, or Bob Jennings, rather, had overreached himself.

I made up my mind that when I went downstairs in the morning I would speak very plainly to my boarder. I waited until nine o'clock, and then I went across the hall and stood at the door of the lower-front chamber. I waited a moment, hesitated, bent my head and listened. I thought I heard some movement within, and gave a gentle tap at the panel. There was no answer. I tapped again. Still silence!

I turned the knob gently, and thought, as I did so, "What if she has gone away as she threatened?" My heart gave a great throb at this, for I could not bear the idea of having her leave me. There was something about her which drew me towards her, and was she not, after all, little Amaranthe? No matter what she had done, or seemed to have done, she was still little Amaranthe, the daughter of Eugene Darlington, my old friend, and the niece of the dear ladies at the Hall.

I pushed open the door. The room was dark, the blinds closed, the green shades drawn closely. There was a sickening odor in the room, at which my heart sank way, way down. What if she were dead? What if my attitude towards her had been too severe? What if she, poor, lonely, unprotected creature, had taken her life, here, under my roof, where, instead of suspicion and injustice, she should of all places have found seclusion, confidence, and the kindest of care? We send missionaries to the heathen: shall we not minister to our own?

I groped my way cautiously in, and now, with the streak of light from the open door, began to see more clearly. I looked, fearful of looking, towards the bed. No, she had not left me. Her slight body was there. Was her spirit there also? She was pale and still; a white cloth lay across her eyes and brow. My dress made a slight rustling sound. How glad I was to hear her voice say, weak though it was,—

"What is it?"

The odors in the room were nauseating. I ran to the window and raised the sash, and let some of God's mild summer breeze and shining sun into the room. She cried out at this and clasped her hands over her eyes.

"Oh! Oh!" she said. "I cannot bear it!" I wondered what it was she could not bear, whether the sunshine or her thoughts.

"What is it?" I cried. "What have you taken? What is this dreadful odor? Are you ill? Amaranthe! little Amaranthe! are you ill?" She wearily dragged the cloth from her forehead, and opened her eyes stupidly.

"What was it," she muttered, "that they gave me—those—those—men? It made me stupid, sleepy. The room is full of it. Ah!"—she snuffed at the fresh, sweet air,—“how good!”

I stooped and picked up a handkerchief that had fallen by the bedside. It was a man's handkerchief of goodly size. It still held the nauseating fumes, though lifeless, of that deadly, stupefying medium, ether. I could not mistake it. I had been obliged by the doctors to use it too often in the Judge's last illness.

"You poor child!" I said, bending over her, my tears raining down fast upon the counterpane. "How could I have distrusted you? So you were the victim,—sinned against, not sinning. My poor little Amaranthe!"

She smiled stupidly and nestled down on the pillow, my hand underneath her cheek.

"How was it that I heard voices in your room last night?" I asked. "How was it?"

"I cannot tell you." She smiled again, and opened her blue eyes a little way, looking into mine, but closing them almost at once, as if the light hurt them.

"But you must know, dear child. It was before you came out into the hall."

"Not in my room," she said, "perhaps in—in—there," she weakly motioned towards Mr. Beldon's chamber.

"But I heard them. I was at your door. I heard them myself."

"You were listening at my door?" This she said with much of her ordinary spirit. "You were——" and then, seeing, perhaps, a look of surprise in my face, she broke down, crying, "Oh, dear Wibby! Dear, dear Wibby! I will tell you all, all the hateful truth. I had hoped for dear daddy's sake that I might be spared it, but I will—I will." Here she drew herself upward in the bed, caught my hand, and held it close over her eyes with both of hers. "Don't make me say more than I must, dear Wibby, don't! I loved dear daddy, I loved him so!" Here she fell to sobbing again, and I cried with her,

not knowing why. After a while she lay quiet, but still sobbing slowly and wearily. "Now listen," she said,—“listen! I was talking. There was a man in my room last night. Yes, Wibby, a man, here in my room.”

"I knew it," said I. "I heard him talking. I saw him go in."

"You saw him come in?"

"Yes, through the window."

"And where were you, may I ask?"

She eyed me with a cold scrutiny that had little in it of the child Amaranthe.

I then gave her the history of my wretched night, and of my leaning out of the parlor window, and of what I saw, of what I had heard.

"It is all true," said she, and sighed. "Oh dear, dear me! Poor me! I thought that I had found a place at last where they would not pursue me, but no place is secret enough. Now, dear Wibby, I am going to make a clean breast of it, as daddy used to say." I drew a chair to the side of the bed, and sat there looking into her wan face.

"Don't look at me, Wibby dear, don't! I can't bear it! Turn your eyes away. There! that is better! Now listen! I shall make it as short as possible, for it is a hateful story."

She raised herself on her pillows again and looked downward, playing with my fingers. She spoke very fast, but the words are burned in on my brain.

"You must know, then, dear Wibby," she began, "that daddy did not always do as he should. He gambled, as I told you. We had less and less money. Sometimes he would come home with a great deal. Then we lived well, and he bought me lovely clothes. Then, when it was gone, and we had not enough for food, he would reproach himself dreadfully. Sometimes he would leave me at the hotel for days and go away alone. When we moved to a sort of pension, kept by an Englishwoman, he did the same. It was very lonely there for me. But always when he came home he would bring some money, so that I bore these absences for the results that would come to us, we needed money so much. One day he came in more flush—I mean with more money than usual. We had a splendid time. We feasted and went on long drives and he took me to the theatre, and things were gayest than ever they had been. Then one day, one dreadful day, when all our money was spent and we were feeling rather poor, the English Consul walked in. He came to our parlor without knocking. He opened the door and came up to daddy and he just said 'Where is Robertson?' Daddy turned white. Oh, I shall never forget it, never! Dear daddy! I loved him even if he did do wrong, and I love him still."

The girl was shaken with a paroxysm of dry sobs. She writhed

and groaned. "Oh daddy!" she murmured, "dear, dearest daddy." I tried to soothe her. "No, let me finish," she said, sitting up and speaking very fast. "I must—I must get this over. We had a servant, an Englishman named Haughtry. He had been with daddy. He had heard the fight, had seen the blow. For, dear Wibby, there had been a fight and a blow. Unless daddy gave him money,—Haughtry, I mean,—he said that he would turn evidence for the Crown. He came in just as the Consul had laid his hand on my father, and stood looking threateningly at him over the Consul's shoulder. Then dear old daddy got up—oh! oh! I was there! I was there! and I had to see—I had to see! 'Sir,' he said,—you know daddy's courtly manner, he was ever a gentleman,—'sir,' he said, not raising his voice at all, 'you have the advantage of me, but I'll be damned if I won't soon have the advantage of you.' With that, before anyone knew what he was intending, he drew his revolver and shot himself through the heart."

"Eugene Darlington took his own life?" Yes, yes, I remembered now to have heard something of the kind, but we always supposed it was after the death of little Amaranthe and because of his despair at her loss.

Again she shook with those convulsive sobs. Her face was flushed. Her features twitched. "And that man, that Haughtry, he it is who has hounded me ever since. That is where all my spare money has gone, all that I make by my nursing. He follows me everywhere. It was so in England, it has been so in America. He told them at the hospital in London that my father was a gambler and a thief, that he had killed a man, and then killed himself. Wherever I go he threatens to denounce me, and I have lived a life of the veriest torture. And now he has found me even here. I had a little money besides the amount which I gave you to take care of. He insisted upon my giving him that last night. It was our voices that you heard. I declared that he should not wring from me my last sou. When I went back into the room after my attempt at bravado with you, he was still there. He seized me, and I know not what—gave me some of that dreadful stuff perhaps,"—she pointed to the handkerchief,—"I do not know. Perhaps he has my money, perhaps not. Do look, dear Wibby, the corner of the top drawer. I have been too ill. Oh! how my head spins round and round. Oh! if he has taken it, and my mother's diamond pendant, what shall I do?" I ran to the chiffonnière. I opened it. There was nothing in any corner, either front or back.

"I am afraid it is gone," said I.

At that she gave a terrible shriek and fell all in a heap in the middle of the bed, and I ran again to soothe her. Aunt Jane Mary thumped overhead, Glorianna came knocking at the door.

"Oh! oh! Do not let them come in," she cried. "Do not let anyone in. The shame of it, the shame of it all! Just you and me, dear Wibby; just you and me!"

Then the poor thing got out of her bed and slid down on the floor and lay her head on my knees. "Oh dear Wibby," she said, "do promise me that you will not tell a soul of what I have told you. Not a soul! Not a soul! Promise! Promise!"

"But," I cried, "my little Amaranthe, you must be protected. I cannot let this persecution of you go on. They can do nothing to you. You need not give this man Haughtry money. He cannot levy his blackmail here, in my house. I will go to President Smith, I will see the police——"

"Oh, not the police!" she murmured, "at least not yet, dear Wibby. Promise me, not yet."

"But someone must protect me," I insisted. "I cannot have such things going on under my roof. I cannot, dear child. I know of an excellent person to ferret out the whole thing. Let me go to him——"

Here again she screamed, her face hid in the folds of my dress. A shadow fell upon her yellow curls. I looked up. It was Elder Wynne, his head protruding within the opening of the window. He made a motion to me not to speak. I was more than indignant with him, and had I not feared frightening Amaranthe into hysterics, I should have risen and denounced him, then and there. I gave him an angry glance and he disappeared. I helped the poor girl to her bed and hastily closed the window. Then I went and got her a soothing draught, and I had the pleasure, an hour later, of seeing that she was sleeping as calmly as an infant. Each time that I passed by the hall-door I saw that Elder Wynne was sitting there in my rocker with the *Star Union* on his knees.

It was a long day. I went to Miss Dacres's room at four o'clock to see if she would not take some nourishment. The room was empty. Her clothes were scattered about the floor. Baldy Towner, when I questioned him, told me that her wheel was gone from the lower stable.

"Ef yer mean yer B'low-Front, thet female from out Westconsin way," added Glorianna, "I guess she's lit out fer good."

At five o'clock I received a message from the Hall by John the coachman. He had brought the carriage, and I was to return with him at once. The sudden illness of one of the ladies seemed to me the only probable cause for so peremptory a summons.

"Is it Miss Elizabeth or Miss Evelyn, John?" I asked nervously.

"I think it's both, ma'am," replied John, "but you was to see them yourself."

"Both? Both ill at once? What can it be? Oh! Why don't you speak out, John?"

"I was told not to, ma'am," replied John. So I sat tremblingly within the carriage as it whirled me along the road to the gates of the Hall. Miss Elizabeth met me at the door. Miss Evelyn was not to be seen. She, Miss Elizabeth, kissed me with a tremulous lip.

"Miss Evelyn?" I gasped. She said no word, but smiled into my face and led me, with her arm round my waist, up the broad flight of stairs. We went to the door of the little sitting-room next that which had been the Squire's bedchamber.

She stopped outside of the door. I heard the murmur of voices within. "Whom do you think we have here?" she questioned.

I could only look and wonder. She pushed open the door. Ah, why could not I have guessed it! They had her with them at last! Upon the couch little Amaranthe was lying, and Miss Evelyn sat beside her, stroking those yellow, boyish curls. The mystery was solved. Little Amaranthe had come to her own.

"You dear old Wibby!" exclaimed my sometime boarder; "come here to me just as fast as you can." I ran to the couch and sat hastily down. "Ouch!" exclaimed the girl, for I had nearly fallen against her foot, which I now perceived was bandaged so that it was quite immense, and caused me to wonder why I had not noticed it before.

Miss Elizabeth stooped over and kissed her. "That's what comes of tomboy games," said she, shaking a gently chiding withered old finger at the girl. "That's what comes of tomboy actions!"

"Don't, sister dear," said Miss Evelyn. "Poor child! Has she not suffered enough?" She laid her head down against the cushion which supported the yellow head, and I wondered which of them had become all at once the most enamored of my late boarder,—my boarder, alas, no more.

"I have lost you!" I cried with tears in my voice. "I have lost you!"

"Not lost, but gone before," laughed she.

At Miss Elizabeth's solemn look, "Dear Aunt Liz," said she, "forgive my flippant ways. I am only a poor girl, who has had no up-bringing." God knows how truly she spoke. "You must teach me better things."

My visits to Darlington Hall were now constant. On the next day I arrived just as they had returned from their afternoon drive. They had been to the village store, and the carriage was a mass of silk and muslin and embroideries fit for a little princess.

"We must dress our darling as becomes the heiress of Darlington Hall," said Miss Elizabeth. "These will do for the present, dear child. Later we must make a pilgrimage to the city,—that is, when your foot gets better."

"Oh," said Amaranthe, as John lifted her from the open victoria,

"I wonder if I shall presently awake and find it all a dream! I was a Cinderella for so long, so long!"

John carried her upstairs. "Somehow," said John to me later, "she don't clasp my neck as the little miss used to do."

"That would not be proper, John," said I. "She is a young lady now. You must get used to the thought that this is our little Amaranthe grown to woman's estate." I followed the procession upstairs, for everyone went, from old Margot to Katherine and myself. Amaranthe closed her eyes tightly. As we reached the top of the stairs, I saw that the door of the Squire's great bedchamber had been opened, and that Miss Elizabeth was standing just within the room, which she had taken for her own, and was beckoning to John to enter. This he did, and advancing towards the bed, for there was no couch in the room, laid his light burden upon it. As she felt the change from the sofa of the little sitting-room to the softer resting-place, Amaranthe opened her eyes suddenly and looked around her. Then she gave a succession of piercing shrieks, as she sprang from the bed and fled unaided through the door-way and into the little sitting-room. There she threw herself upon the sofa, still giving vent to screams of hysterical anger and passion. I had seen her behave in this way a few days before, but then there seemed to be some cause for it. There was no such cause now. The poor ladies, overcome by this change in her, closed round their ruffled dove and tried to smoothe her feathers and calm her spirit. "Go away!" she cried. "Go away! You are trying to entrap me, to deceive me. I am not accustomed to that—that bed. I thought he was bringing me here. My nerves are wrecked, and you are setting me wild among you. I will leave this house this moment. Call the carriage. I will go back to Mrs. Brathwaite, or the poor woman in the city who took me in, rather than stay among people who, knowing what I wish, try simply to annoy and upset me."

To say that the poor ladies were dumfounded but feebly expresses their feelings. They wept, they implored, they soothed, they begged forgiveness, and as I left them Amaranthe was sobbing some very wet sobs, and begging them, if they loved her, never to surprise her again; to tell her always what they meant to do, which they, poor, sweet souls, promised most faithfully.

As I went up my steps, I found that Elder Wynne was sitting, as usual, by the front door.

"I have not seen much of Miss Dacres lately?" said he.

I thought this an excellent time to tell him what had been the outcome of my taking Amaranthe into my house, so I sat down and told him the whole story. When I had finished he exclaimed, "Capital! Capital! Nothing could be better! What a clever young woman."

"And how do you mean she was clever?" I asked indignantly. I had made Amaranthe's cause so much my own, that I could not bear to hear a word said to her discredit.

"Why, clever, most clever, to be thrown from her bicycle exactly in front of the Hall door, and be taken in as she was, while she took them in."

"Took them in," said I angrily. "She could have walked up there any day, and with those little portraits of herself as a child, with the reminiscences of her babyhood, with the letters to her father, with her memories of the place, of the animals, of me, to say nothing of Amaranthe's eyes, and Amaranthe's hair, she could have got into their hearts just as completely as she has through her accident. Your sort of people——"

"Gently! gently!" said Elder Wynne. I now saw that Mr. Beldon was standing behind the pillar where twined the champeny cluster, and as I had not seen him come in or go out, he had probably been there ever since I took my seat. I started as my eyes fell upon him."

"Don't mind Mr. Beldon," said Elder Wynne, coughing as he spoke. "He has probably enjoyed this story much more than I have." How Elder Wynne knew Mr. Beldon was standing behind him I could not imagine.

"You have neither of you enjoyed it," said I, nearly crying. "You are so suspicious, Elder Wynne,"—it's strange how easily I kept forgetting his double personality,—"you see faults and frailties in every one, and as for Mr. Beldon, he has always hated her."

"I hate Miss Dacres?" said Mr. Beldon, coming out from behind the rosebush and up on to the piazza.

"Yes, you, Mr. Beldon. What has the poor child ever done to you? Yet from the first you have disliked her. She was rude to you, I know, but you have been much worse to her."

"Still, I do not hate your boarder, Mrs. Brathwaite."

"I do not think that Mr. Beldon hates Miss Dacres," said Elder Wynne, taking his side against me.

Mr. Beldon flung a scrutinizing glance at Elder Wynne.

"And why have you any opinion at all on the subject, Elder Wynne?" he asked.

But Elder Wynne was coughing, and could not answer.

When Mr. Beldon had mounted his wheel and ridden off to town, and Elder Wynne had ceased coughing, he said, looking up at me apologetically, "I always say too much, always. Somehow I hate to miss such a chance as that. And now I have a few little curios to show you, Mrs. Brathwaite." He arose and went into the hall and turned in to the room that had been Amaranthe's.

"How did you get in here?" I cried. "I have the key in my pocket."

"And, as you see, I have the key in the lock. Don't bother your head with foolish questions, dear Mrs. Brathwaite, but just see what I have found in your cellar." He closed the door, the shades were already lowered, and directed my gaze towards the farther side of the bed. There, on chairs and on the table, which he had pushed behind the bed, between it and the wall, were various articles of silver, beautiful, rich pieces, some of which I recognized as having seen in the old days at the Hall, others with monograms and crests, which I recognized as being those of various country families near, though the articles themselves I had never seen. It made a goodly showing, although the silver was dull and needed silver polish. Elder Wynne nodded and tapped the table with his fingers. "In your own cellar," he said. "It is strange that the cellar stairs should descend from Miss Dacres's room."

"Not at all," I said angrily. "There is a great deal that I cannot tell you, much that was told me in confidence, but I know exactly how those things must have got there." I had the man Haughtry in my mind. Of course it was he who had stolen the silver and had forced my boarder to allow him to deposit it in the cellar, but this I was bound by my promise to Amaranthe not to divulge.

"You seem to go about my house, Elder Wynne, exactly as if you owned it."

"I do," said he, chuckling, a queer, subdued inward chuckle, "but not as Elder Wynne, as Bob Jennings at your service. By the way, let me tell you something else. I have, I fear, had to tell you many an unpleasant thing since you have so kindly given me a home. Do you consider your aunt quite a helpless invalid?"

"She is," said I. "Every one knows it."

"I am sorry, dear lady, to disabuse your confidence in her, but she is quite as able to walk as—no, not quite as able as you are, but she walks very well." My thoughts flew to the money. "No, she did not take that," he said, reading my mind. "You have heard, I suppose, of a *malade imaginaire*, Mrs. Brathwaite? It's a French expression, I believe."

"Yes," I said slowly, faintly recalling the expression met with in some of my readings long ago. "Is that what Aunt Jane Mary is?"

"No, she's not even that." I wondered why he had asked the question. "She knows perfectly that she has nothing the matter with her but fat—pure, unadulterated fat—and laziness, the one caused by the other."

"I will not have you speak so of my relatives, Elder Wynne," I said. "I am sure that President Smith would never have——"

"Oh, yes, yes, he would," said the old man in his weak voice.

"How do you know all this, Elder Wynne?" I asked.

"Just the way I know all the other things. Just the way that I know about the Lost Tribes." He smiled. "But I forgot, that subject is tabooed. I learn by study, and interest in my work, and various experiments. Do you suppose that the faint creakings that are heard at night all have their origin in the meanderings of rats or denizens of the spirit world? No, Mrs. Brathwaite, I have walked about your house and grounds for many an hour after you are in bed."

"I never hear your cough," I said.

"No, I manage at such times to suppress my cough. It has its uses, but not at midnight. As I have said, I walk about your house and grounds when all the world is wrapped in sleep, and I have never met with either rats or mystical spirits as yet."

"Have you ever met with any—any—thing—one," I asked nervously.

"Never met with them. They know nothing of my being about, but there is a great deal going on in your house at night, dear Mrs. Brathwaite, while you are sleeping your weary, tired sleep, that you do not see, even in dreams."

It gave me an eerie feeling to think of people being about the house, our own home, being wide awake, and passing up and down the stairs or through the halls, when I was away in the land of oblivion.

"Be comforted, dear lady," continued Elder Wynne. "While I am here they shall not harm you or yours, and I shall not go until they go."

He gave me comfort, as he always did when he spoke seriously to me.

"But about my Aunt Jane Mary?"

"There is not much that I can tell you," replied Elder Wynne. "I have discovered that she is a night-walker, but not a sleep-walker. I should not jump and run so fast on those poor tired legs of yours, if I were you, dear Mrs. Brathwaite, when her damned little bell rings, and I should not wind that electrical machine for an hour or two every night just to give her fat old legs a tickling sensation."

I was shocked at Elder Wynne's profanity and vulgarity. It seemed impossible that that dreadful word, which I had heard but once in my life, and that from a man whose horse had run away and thrown him out in the road by our gate, could have been spoken by this gentle appearing old man. An Elder of the Church. Ah! There! I had forgotten Bob Jennings again.

VII.

I WENT to my bed early that night, but not to sleep for long. At about twelve o'clock I was sent for very hurriedly. Miss Elizabeth had been taken suddenly ill. I remained with her all that night and the next day, sending word to my house that Glorianna must attend to the

wants of Aunt Jane Mary and my boarders. In the early afternoon I went into the little sitting-room, where Amaranthe, who had regained her calm some days ago, was lying on the couch. Her foot was almost well now, but still she humored it. She was reading, and as she laid her book down, I saw her eyes glance upward. Mine followed them. She was lying just under that mantelpiece. I saw that she was looking at the paper with which Miss Elizabeth kept the upright slab in place.

She said nothing, and neither did I. I felt then that if Miss Elizabeth intended the jewels for her niece, it would be better for her to take her into her confidence, show them to her, and then send them to a bank or some place of safe deposit. I determined to speak to Miss Elizabeth as soon as she could bear it. She had suffered great pain all day, and was forced to lie in her bed, and what worried me greatly was the fact that Miss Evelyn had also been attacked and in the same manner.

"What do you think is the matter with my aunts?" asked Amaranthe, when I went into the little sitting-room to get a cup of tea.

"I'm sure I can't tell," said I. "I am somewhat anxious, as Dr. Williams is far away at his father's bedside, and this young man from the village does not seem to know much." Amaranthe now got up with my help and walked about the room and along the corridor. I was so glad of this that I begged her to go in to see her Aunt Elizabeth.

Her face flushed scarlet, always a sign of agitation with her. "Don't ask me," said she earnestly. "I cannot bear a sick-room. I am afraid that you think me very heartless, but I am so constitutionally. Dear daddy was just so. It mortifies me dreadfully, but so it is. I had to do it to earn my living, but I always hated it. I think we should have a nurse, don't you?"

"Yes," said I, "I think we should."

"I wish you would speak to the Doctor," said she.

I went back to Miss Elizabeth and sat with her until nine o'clock. Then when she had fallen quietly asleep I returned up to the little sitting-room again. To my surprise a stranger arose and greeted me. It was a woman in the dress of those pious sisters who go about among the sick and sorrowful. She bowed and left the room by a farther door. I sat there wondering who had sent for her. I had not seen the Doctor since an hour earlier. In a few moments Amaranthe came in.

"Who is that woman?" she asked.

"You mean the Sister?" said I. "I thought that you had sent for her." For Amaranthe was assuming now the role of mistress of the Hall, as the ladies wished and urged her to do.

"No," she said, "I never sent for her. Probably it was that little Doctor. Well, I don't know but it's a sensible thing, after all, only I

should not have let him send for a Sister of Charity. I don't like them. Dear old Wibby, you must go home now, and let that woman—ugh! I don't like her looks,—that Sister, take the care off your hands.”

I promised her, because I saw that she was determined, that I would go back to my home and rest, but I had no intention of keeping my promise.

“Very well,” said I. “Good-by then; I will come over to-morrow.”

I went back to Miss Elizabeth's room. There she lay in the middle of the great bed where the Squire had breathed his last. She was awake again, and as I came in she raised herself up in the bed in a very excited state, her lips trembling nervously.

“What is this?” she asked, “about a nurse having come into the house? I told that little Doctor,—you know who he is, Sophronia, old Allibone the butcher's son; of course, he knows nothing but anatomy,”—she smiled faintly,—“I told him that I would not have a nurse. I positively forbade him to send a nurse to this house, and yet what does he do but go right off and get one.”

“It's too bad,” said I. “If you don't want her, you needn't have her. I will go and dismiss her, if I can find her. Perhaps she has gone down to the kitchen.” I went towards the door, but remembered as I touched the knob that there was yet something that I ought to say. “I want to tell you,” I said, “that Amaranthe is greatly distressed at your illness.”

“Dear child!” exclaimed Miss Elizabeth with fervor.

“She said that had her foot and ankle been all right, she should have come in here and taken the entire care of you. She referred to her calling as a trained nurse.”

“No child of Eugene Darlington's should ever have worked for her living, Sophronia,” said Miss Elizabeth sternly. “Tell the child so, and tell her that I should not allow her, weak as she must be, to stand over me and nurse me. When I am better, please God! to-morrow, I shall be glad to have her come in.”

“She has been to see Miss Evelyn,” said I, for Amaranthe had told me so, “and sat with her for a half hour.”

“Dear little girl! So sweet! so unselfish! What a treasure we have found, Sophronia. What a treasure! Now, Sophronia, do you go and dismiss that woman and then come back here. If there is anything to pay, pay it out of this purse.” Miss Elizabeth took a fat pocket-book from under her pillow and held it out to me. I went back, and took it from her hand, and passed out softly, closing the door. I went straight to the little sitting-room, expecting to find Amaranthe there still. The room was but poorly lighted. As I opened the door the strange nurse came towards me from the fireplace.

"Is Miss Darlington here?" I asked. The woman hesitated, looking inquiringly at me. I now noticed how very black was her hair, smooth and flossy under her white coif, and saw also that one of her front teeth was gone.

"Miss Amaranthe, perhaps I should have said."

"Oh, the young lady with the yellow hair. She went out of that door just now." The woman was thin, as thin as Amaranthe herself, and she spoke in a queer, cracked voice with an almost childish lisp. Her whole appearance filled me with distrust.

"I will look for her later," I said. "At present I have come to tell you that Miss Elizabeth Darlington is quite nervous, and prefers not to have strangers in the house, and she has asked me to tell you so."

The young woman drew herself up stiffly.

"This is a very strange proceeding," she said. "The Doctor—by the way, has he left the house?"

"He left at eight o'clock," said I. "He said that he should not return before nine in the morning."

"I am sorry that he is not here," said she freezingly. "Then he would have to bear the brunt of bringing me into a house where I am not wanted."

"I think myself that it is a great piece of presumption," said I, as I pictured little Johnny Allibone having had the assurance to even step foot inside of Darlington Hall. "But the regular Doctor, always called in by the family, is away, and we had to take this young man or nothing. From where did he obtain you?"

"At the sisterhood just outside the town," said she. "I shall feel very much mortified, naturally, to return there so late at night. Can I not stay until the morning? They will think that the blame lies with me, that I have committed some breach of etiquette, or have made some mistake in the case; really, it is very mortify——"

"No one can be more sorry about it than I am, and than Miss Darlington herself is," said I. "She has commissioned me to offer you——" I began to open the pocket-book.

"Does Miss Darlington think that she can soothe my wounded honor with money?" It seemed to me that the subject did not call for so much dignified anger. "No! kindly tell Miss Darlington that I could not accept a penny at her hands. Good-evening! I shall reckon with Dr. Allibone for this," and she swept out of the room.

It was all very unpleasant, extremely so! What unpleasant things do happen in this world! There was Aunt Jane Mary, always considered the soul of truth and probity, getting out of her bed and wandering round the house at night. There was that tiresome Elder Wynne, for I had become weary of Bob Jennings and his double personality, showing me things that he said he had found secreted in my

cellar, Heaven knows when, perhaps by those men who had chloroformed Amaranthe; and between Baldy Towner, and Bill's being dead, and my almost wishing that Glorianna was, I felt that life had become a pretty problem.

I sat me down upon the sofa, which always stood against the fireplace,—I don't know why, but on those hot days and nights there was a pleasant draught across and under it up the chimney. I lay my head back upon the pillow. I was tired, tired! Should I sleep? I raised my eyes and encountered the under side of the marble slab that rested upon the two upright slabs, and as I looked my glance fell upon the loosened one which Miss Elizabeth had said, which in fact I knew, concealed the case of rubies. The paper which had held it in place was gone, the least touch would loosen it. I shook the slab. It fell forward against the sofa. I arose in tremulous haste, and, pushing away the sofa, lowered the slab upon the floor. There was nothing behind it. The cavity was empty!

I arose to my feet at once. Whom should I suspect? The Sister of Charity, of course. Whom else could it be? There was no one else to suspect, except Miss Elizabeth's maid, Katherine, and she had lived in the family for seventeen years. She was as careful a guardian of the family honor and the family possessions as any born Darlington of them all. My thoughts, try as I would, reverted ever to the Sister of Charity, and I was quite right, as events will show. Just here I heard a shout. The sound was of men's voices. Then came a piercing scream, a single revolver-shot was fired, and then I heard the sound of running feet. The steps were coming towards the great door of the Hall. I ran swiftly down the stairs, unbarred and unlocked the door, for I heard John's voice among the rest, and Mr. Beldon's in mild protest. I came out upon the broad top step of the stone flight in the brilliant moonlight. A group of people were below me. A woman had just sprung upon the lower step as I opened the door, and had run a little way upward.

"No use, Josie," said a voice, which I recognized as the voice of Bob Jennings. Ah, it was the Sister of Charity whom he had captured. I was right, after all. He sprang up the two or three steps, caught her in his grasp, and snapped something upon her wrists with a click, and then she gave another piercing scream which had something of familiarity in it.

I remember hoping that she would not awaken the ladies and Amaranthe. All three would be terrified,—poor, nervous little Amaranthe more than all. Behind Jennings came two men in policemen's uniform, and between them they dragged, almost carried, a man in the garb of a priest. His hat had fallen off, and I could see his tonsured head. His face was smooth shaven, and pale from fright and

anger. They came, all of them, part way up the steps. I remember what a dreadful picture they made in the clear moonlight. It was terrible to me to see a detective holding a woman as a prisoner, and that woman a sister of a religious body. I remember that Jennings said, "No, no! don't go in here. The ladies are ill." I wondered how he knew. "Let us go round to the kitchen-door. Mrs. Brathwaite, can you let us in?" I started back through the hall. I ran to the back of the house, and through several rooms and passages I took my hurried way until I came to the hall-door leading into the kitchen apartments. This I unbolted and unlocked, and the detective, the two policemen, and their captured prey came into the house together. Jennings marshalled the party into the kitchen, where the still hot stove gave forth a little glow. Old Margot had awakened and ran down stairs to us. When she saw the Priest and the nurse, she threw her apron over her head and gave a succession of screams, worse, even, than the one which had told of the Sister's agony.

The detective seized the Priest and whisked him round, facing me.

"Do you know this man, Mrs. Brathwaite?" said Jennings.

"No," said I, "I do not."

"Nor this lady?"

"I never saw her before," said I, "at least until this evening. She is a perfect stranger to me."

Jennings raised his hand towards the Sister's white cap. She bent her body in futile struggles. He held the gyves upon her wrist, as if in a vise, with one of his strong hands. The Priest was pale at this treatment of the Sister.

"How dare you?" he said, almost foaming at the mouth. "Had I my hands free, Priest of the church as I am, I would brain you, you coward, where you stand."

"Yes, I dare say you would," said Jennings, "but, you see, your hands are not free." He again raised his hand towards the Sister's coif; again she dodged, bent double, strained backward, to avoid him, but all to no purpose, for, with a quick and dexterous upward throw of his arm, he knocked the white cap to the floor. The dark hair went with it. I turned sick and chill. My knees gave way under me, and I sank upon a box standing near the wall, for whom should I recognize, freed by the detective from her hateful disguise, but Amaranthe Darlington.

"Oh!" I cried, "but this is some mistake. How dare you? She is only masquerading!"

"Wibby! Wibby!" said Amaranthe, trying to stretch out her manacled hands to me, "save me from this indignity. My aunts will save me. Go and tell them, Wibby, go and tell them."

"Now don't get excited, Josie," said Jennings.

"So you don't know that gentleman, Mrs. Brathwaite," continued Jennings, nodding at the Priest,—“Father Darby!”

I withdrew my eyes from little Amaranthe, dazed and wondering, almost too weak to speak, and only gasped “No.”

“Try your lightning change, Hoyt, won't you?” said Jennings to the Priest.

The Priest stood sullen and pale. Whereupon one of the policemen, handing the bound wrists to his companion, took certain stage properties from the pocket of the Priest, not without something of a struggle, however, then with the grasp of a giant and with a great rip, he tore away the clerical coat, in which the man was garbed, and exposed to view the old worn brown suit which I knew well, aye, even to the papers sticking from the pockets. Ah! I recognized them all, the journalist's coat, the pencils, the incriminating pad. Then with a dexterous movement he snatched from the Priest's head the skin which covered his hair, he clapped a whiskers and mustaches upon his face, and held them there. The man struggled, but to no purpose. All at once it was my Lower-Back, Mr. Beldon.

“But these are my boarders; I know them well,” I cried.

“Not very well, I fear,” said Jennings. “Let me introduce you to Mr. Parky Hoyt and his wife Josie. I should say, as I am now in polite society,—Darlington Hall, you know,—Mr. and Mrs. Parkington Hoyt, the cleverest jail-birds that we ever sent up the river for a summer's vacation. I'm afraid, though, Josie,” said he, turning and smiling pleasantly at the girl, “it will be a longer trip for you this time. The old gentleman, you know—we've proof enough—”

“I swear before God,” said Miss Dacres, “that I never meant to—it was just to keep him quiet. He was weaker than I thought he—”

“St,” said the Priest warningly.

“You needn't incriminate yourself, Josie,” said Jennings.

“But his credentials—Mr. Beldon's,” I said. “They were so excellent—from Mr. Haight and from Mr. Everett, both of the *Star Union*.”

“It's very easy to write a recommendation,” said Bob Jennings, smiling and showing his beautiful teeth,—“the easiest thing in the world. Did you ever see Mr. Haight's signature, Mrs. Brathwaite?”

“No,” I admitted, “except the letter that Mr. Beldon brought me.”

“Perhaps it would have been wiser to have put on your bonnet one fine morning and made a little trip to the city and to the sanctum of the editor of the *Star Union*.”

“I never thought of that,” I cried.

"He knew you wouldn't."

"I trusted him from the first."

"He knew you would."

"Oh! I have a piece of your property here, Josie," said Jennings, turning to her; "I forgot that." He drew from his pocket the purse which I had found on the stone near the Swedes' Church and had never thought of again until this moment.

She tried to clutch it. My God forbid that I shall ever again see so sickening a sight as that yellow-haired girl turned to a maniac with frenzy.

"Not just yet, Josie," said Jennings; "just wait a moment. Mrs. Brathwaite, will you kindly open that pocket-book? Pardon my throwing it, but Josie isn't as quiet as she should be under the circumstances. You'll be quieter a little later, Josie, my dear."

"My God! my God!" ejaculated Mr. Beldon.

Jennings threw the purse into my lap, and with weak and trembling fingers I pressed the clasp. "Where did you get it?" I asked faintly.

"Out of your pocket, madam. The pocket of the dress that you wore when we took that charming drive together." I had not worn it since. "Please see what is inside." I took from the purse some money.

"Open and count it, madam."

There were but two bills. I recognized them at once. I had thought of them so often. They were of the denominations one hundred dollars and fifty dollars. "Examine them closely, Mrs. Brathwaite, please," said Jennings.

I did so.

"What do you see?"

"Two letters," said I.

At this the girl writhed afresh, but Jennings held her with tight grasp. As for Mr. Beldon, he had sunk in a chair all doubled up in a heap, and hung his head upon his breast.

"The letters," said I, "are A. D."

"Did you ever know anyone named A. D.?"

"No," said I, "no. Oh, yes! why, of course I have—A. David Darlington."

"Yes, A. D."

"I know that his letters to the ladies were often signed A. D.," said I, "that is before—before—they—Adam David his name was—"

"That doesn't prove they were his," said Miss Dacres.

"No," said Jennings, "it doesn't, but perhaps the Squire's diary may. Margot, where is that little red book that you showed to Elder Wynne last week?"

"What has Elder Wynne to do with this case?" said Miss Dacres, flashing an enraged look at the company generally.

"Everything," said Jennings quietly. "Now, Mrs. Brathwaite, turn to the last page, will you, and read, kindly read aloud." I did as he told me. I read aloud:

"April the seventeenth, Darlington Hall.

"I am afraid! afraid! Margot has slipped in—— She has given me pen and ink. I have set my initials in the corner of some notes. What good that will do me I know not, but it will be proof—in case——"

Here the writing stopped.

"Is that the writing of Adam David Darlington?" asked Jennings.

As he asked this question I was aroused by a low, moaning cry. Miss Dacres began like a little crying child, but her tones rose higher and higher, until her sobbing and wailing filled the old kitchen.

"Wibby, Wibby," she said,—she had flushed crimson, as she always did when experiencing great emotion,—“you don't believe it, you won't. Oh Wibby! Wibby!”

"She stole those and the letters," interpolated Jennings,—“Heaven alone knows how much more,—and stole the money from you again so you'd have to keep her. Stole the letters and studied them carefully. Margot remembers when the Consul sent them home,—the letters, I mean,—after Mr. Eugene Darlington's death. The Squire had them in that small black desk of his; he used to read 'em over and over,—didn't you say so, Margot?—and you saw him, didn't you, Josie, probably read some of 'em to him yourself. So you can still blush?”

Beldon spoke again.

"Have you got the Doctor, Jennings?" he said in a low voice of inquiry.

"Yes, quite safe in Mrs. Brathwaite's cellar. But then, as you know, he has been there for some days past. Oh! now, come! come! dear Mrs. Brathwaite, don't, I beg of you, be nervous on his account. Don't you know I told you that much went on at night of which you knew nothing, but didn't I also say that I would take care of you, and haven't I? Haven't I, now? It is only Haughtry, Miss Dacres's faithful servant, or unfaithful one, so called, the Dr. Lestrangle of this most interesting case. He was here, as you know, with Squire Darlington. He posed as a good Catholic, and brought this pious Priest, and more pious Sister, into the house to help him in the care of the Squire's physical health and family possessions. He has made your cellar a place of safe deposit. You know I told you what I had found—yes, Josie, my dear, I had it all up in the lower front while you were masquerading as the heiress of Darlington Hall. I must

restore it to-morrow. It will take me quite the whole day. Some for 'The Larches,' some for Lawyer Parsons, some for 'The Beeches,' some for Marchbank, not to speak of the church service from Wehauken Town. I really think, though, that Dr. Lestrangle should be made to polish the silver before I return it. It would look much better for a little hot soapsuds and silicon, but at present he is incapacitated, I fear, as he has broken into a case of old brandy which you had probably forgotten, Mrs. Brathwaite, left there by the Judge in the dark ages, so that his imaginary companions are those pleasant creatures of natural history, the snake, the rat, the black beetle, and others of equal interest. In fact, Mrs. Brathwaite, our dear Dr. Lestrangle considers that he is residing for the present within the boundaries of a zoölogical garden, but I shall relieve you of him early to-morrow morning."

"Will you stow it, Jennings?" asked Mr. Beldon, who seemed all at once to have forgotten his literary style, "and get away from this?"

And now Amaranthe, or Josephine Dacres, or Mrs. Parkington Hoyt, as they now called her,—I got very much confused with all these changes of names,—Josephine Dacres turned and looked at me. She stretched out her hand, while something like a smile played round her lips.

"Good-by, Wibby," she said, and then she laughed aloud.

She went on: "The game is done," she said, "finished, played out to the end! If they will only believe my plea, and not find me guilty of murder. I had no thought of killing him, any more than I had of making the two old ladies so ill. What a muddy night it was when I left the Hall! You remember about the muddy shoes, don't you, Wibby? and Baldy Towner?" she began to laugh. "I only wanted to quiet him—the old gentleman, I mean—while I searched for——"

"Stt," said Mr. Beldon warningly.

"While you rummaged," interpolated Jennings.

"If I can only be sent where Jim is," continued Miss Dacres recklessly. "There I——"

"Where Jim is!" I exclaimed,—“your brother Jamie? He is dead. Sent where he is?"

"Jim dead!" she ejaculated breathlessly. "Jim dead! How do you know? Who—who—told you?"

"You told me yourself," said I, "when you came to me: You said——"

"I never told you so. I said that Jim was dead?"

"You said that Jamie had been taken off suddenly, that he had gone the way of his kind, that he——"

"Oh, is that where you got your information?" The flush left

her face. She was calm again. "Haven't you learned yet not to believe one word I say? I never said Jim was dead. I did say that he had gone away. I told you he had gone the way of his kind. Oh Jim! Jim!" And now for the first time her voice rang true. If there was a creature on this earth whom my sometime boarder loved, it must have been her brother Jamie, serving a life-sentence for the very same sort of mistake which she had made herself.

"You were at liberty to put your own construction upon it. Dear old Jim! If I can get into the same four walls, no matter where they may be, no matter what partitions may be between us——"

"Don't you think we've had sentiment enough?" said Beldon sullenly.

"You were always jealous of Jim," she laughed. "And now good-by, Wibby,—a long and last farewell." She began to color again and took a step towards me. "I think that perhaps had I really been little Amaranthe, or whether I was or no, I think that if I had had the kindness and love that you and the old ladies have shown me earlier in life, that something different might have been made of me." I pushed close to her; there was real moisture in her eye.

"What has she done?" said I to Jennings, "that you should take her away like this? Others may have put stolen articles in my cellar, but does it argue that because this girl lived in the room above the cellar that she was guilty? They were in my house, but was *I* guilty? Why don't you arrest me?"

"You hardly have the appearance of a 'fence,' Mrs. Brathwaite; besides which, your previous good character must testify to——"

"Thank you, dear old Wibby. You would save me if you could, but as you see, Mr. Jennings is prejudiced." She turned on Jennings then, and with a phenomenal change of voice and tone which held all that could be imagined of bitterness, helpless rage, anger, passion, and hatred, she shrieked:

"Oh you! How I should love to tear your sneaking eyes out of your coward's head! Coming into a house in a disguise to spy upon a defenceless girl——"

"I always wondered you and Parky didn't see through me, Josie," said Jennings, laughing carelessly. "You didn't know about the plug in the floor, did you? and how could you know of the keys that fitted every drawer and trunk that you possessed? When you and Parky and Lestrangle went off on your midnight raids, then came my innings. Why, Josie, I've spent hours in your rooms, yours and Parky's. I even tried Lestrangle's bed in the cellar, but I saw real rats where he sees only those that come from——"

"If we are going, let us go," said Miss Dacres, with a shudder. It seemed to me as if she might have been somewhat ashamed of these revelations before me. I have always hoped that there was that much good in her. A million thoughts rushed pell-mell through my brain. "Who is to tell the ladies?—the dear ladies!" was uppermost.

And now, with a lightning rip of her black nun's dress, Bob Jennings, the detective, cut open the girl's skirt. He drew something quickly forth and threw it into my lap. "They will be safe with you," he said, and turned towards the door. "We must go if we want to catch the one-twenty-seven express," and he hurried my sometime boarder from the room and out into the night. The policemen arose. They dragged my Lower-Back to his feet and pulled him towards the door, and I sat there dazed, with the blue velvet case in my hands. I opened it slowly, though I needed not to do it, for I knew what a flood of light lay imprisoned within.

"My Lord!" ejaculated Margot, as she looked over my shoulder, blinded by the rays of the Darlington rubies.



PERSEPHONE

BY FLORENCE EARLE COATES

THE wild bird's first exultant strain
Says,—“Winter is over—over!”
And Spring returns to the wold again,
With breath as of lilac and clover.

With a certain soft, appealing grace,
(Surely some sorrow hath kissed her!)
She gives to our vision her girlish face,
And we know how we've missed her—
missed her!

For on a day she went away,
Long ere the leaves were falling,
And came no more for the whitethroat's
lay,
Nor the pewee's plaintive calling:

In tender tints on her brodered shoon
Blossomed the leaves of the myrtle,
And silky buds of the darling June
Were gathered up in her kirtle;

And fair, fair, fair, in her sunlit hair
Were violets intertwining,
That seemed more fresh and unfading there
Than with dewdrops on them shining!

She hid them all in her dim retreat.
But, heart, a truce to sighing!—
She's here—incomparably sweet,
Unchanging and undying!

We see her brow, and we rejoice,
Her cheek, as it pales and flushes,
We hear once more in her thrilling voice
The note of the woodland thrushes;

And through her lashes, tear-emppearled,
A mystic light is breaking,
And all the love of the whole wide world
Seems in her eyes awaking!

OUR VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY

By Eben E. Rexford

Author of "Flowers: How to Grow Them"



OUR village is pleasantly located. It has river frontage, and some very fine trees, and quite a number of attractive residences.

It also has a two-acre lot which had long been known as "the park," because it was public property. It was bought years ago, when the town had a "boom," as a site for a court-house. But a rival town got the court-house, the "boom" collapsed, and our "park" became the village cow-pasture.

Its fine elms made it a shady, pleasant place, and many of us saw great possibilities in it, if, as we used to say to each other, "the town ever improved any." But, like the rest of the village, as a village, the two-acre lot was so neglected that we took no pride in it, and the question of cutting it up for residence purposes finally came before the village Council.

It was this suggestion on the part of some members of the Council which gave birth to our Village Improvement Society, for, when the matter came up for serious consideration, one Councilman opposed the measure vigorously. In conversation with his friends, outside the Council-room, he had some severe things to say about our lack of public spirit, which he asserted had resulted in the general air of "gone-to-seedness" which characterized the place.

"Why," said he, "we might have one of the most charming little villages in this part of the country if we had more pride and interest in it. But we don't seem to have any. Every season I hear people from the city remarking about our shiftlessness and neglect of the place. 'It might be made delightful, if——' And that if of theirs is equal to a volume in its unspoken criticism on our lack of enterprise and improvement. In my opinion, it would be a shame to sell off the park. We may not need it now, but if we ever wake up and *do something* we'll see the mistake we made, but we'll find it out when it's too late to help matters, for there's no chance to get another piece of land like it. I wish I could stir up some enthusiasm among the

people, and get them to go in for a reform all along the line. I read of Village Improvement Societies in other places. One would be a good thing for us, I think."

"Why not have one, then?" suggested one of the group.

"Why not, indeed?" said another. "I'd be glad to join such a society and do what I could to help it along, and I think the rest of our neighbors would. We all see the need of improvement."

So it came about that in less than an hour the village improvement idea was enthusiastically received. It seemed as if it was just what everybody had been waiting for. A public meeting was decided on, and a notice was posted up, asking all who were interested in the improvement of the village to meet at one of the churches on Wednesday evening.

Wednesday evening came, and the church was filled with men and women. The man who had objected to selling off the park was made chairman of the meeting, and he briefly stated its object to the audience. Then two or three of the leading citizens spoke heartily in favor of the project and an informal discussion ensued. The result was that we had no difficulty in effecting an organization, and our Village Improvement Society came into existence with a membership of over fifty.

In discussing the method of management we decided to have everything about it as simple as possible, for some of us recognized the fact that success in undertakings of this nature is largely dependent on simplicity and directness. In order to avoid friction and "running-expenses," it is wise to have but little machinery in a society of this kind, and that of the simplest character consistent with effectiveness. We dispensed with a formal and elaborate "constitution" and "code of by-laws," for we did not think either was needed. We simply drew up a paper setting forth the object of the society and the few rules we thought necessary to formulate for its operation, and when we had subscribed our names to it we were full-fledged, active members.

In this paper it was stated that membership was conditional on an agreement on our part to devote at least one day's work, spring and fall, to the improvement of the home grounds, and to give one day's work, spring and fall, to the improvement of public grounds and vacant places belonging to non-residents if called on to do so.

Each member pledged himself to the payment of one dollar semi-annually, the money thus secured to constitute a general fund to be drawn on in meeting the expenses attendant on the improvement of public places. We had but three officers, a president, secretary, and treasurer. It was understood that the president was to have supervision of all work on public places, with the power of appoint-

ing such committees as might be deemed necessary whenever they were needed.

At first we had not proposed to take women into membership, but it was suggested that they had as much right in the society as men had, and would, no doubt, take as much interest in it,—and quite likely a good deal more. Accordingly it was unanimously voted to admit them.

Let me say, right here, for the benefit of those who may decide on having an Improvement Society, that in my opinion it will not be what it ought to be unless it admits women to membership. Let this be honorary membership, if thought best,—by that I mean exemption from the payment of dues and the performance of manual labor,—but by all means let women come into the society. Their opinions will be found valuable and helpful, and they will do much by their enthusiasm to encourage good work.

As was stated in the paper to which we subscribed our names, the work of improvement was to begin at home. We began it at once. It was surprising to note what a change was made in the general appearance of the place by one day's work about each home. It seemed incredible that so much could be accomplished in so short a time. We began to realize, then, as never before, the importance of concerted action.

Our first day's work was a valuable object-lesson to us. But many of our members were not satisfied with one day's work. They felt that entire satisfaction could only come from thoroughness, and accordingly they kept at it until everything about their places was in apple-pie order. Their efforts proved contagious. Those who were not members of the society caught the enthusiasm of improvement, and the good work went forward on every hand. It lasted long enough to enable us to accomplish really remarkable results,—not remarkable, perhaps, when individually considered, but quite so when looked at in the aggregate. Old lawns were renovated and new ones were made; trees, shrubs, and vines were planted and beds planned for flowers; old fences were mended and painted, some were removed; we cleaned away the rubbish which had accumulated everywhere because of the careless, slovenly habits we had fallen into;—in short, we did a hundred and one things which I need not make special mention of here, but which each member of a society for general improvement will find waiting to be done when an aggressive campaign is begun. In going about the village shortly after the era of reform had set in we were delighted at the evidences of neatness which met us on every hand, and we congratulated ourselves on what had already been effected by combined effort expended along the same line.

We began public improvement at the church. The grounds about

it were cleaned up thoroughly and some trees and vines set out; old hitching-posts were removed and neat new ones provided; the sheds at the rear were reboarded and painted a quiet, neutral color. Then we went to work on the school-grounds, and we did not leave them until they were as tidy in appearance as the grounds about our homes were. We set out a good many trees there, some of them evergreens, made provision for beds to be filled with flowers by the children, and arranged trellises of lathwork, to be covered with vines, as screens for the outbuildings.

Then "the park" was taken in hand. Thistles, mulleins, nettles, and other weeds of an aggressive character had taken full possession, and the cows which had been allowed to feed there had not interfered with them. These we cleared away and sowed the places where they had grown with lawn-grass seed. We built seats here and there under the trees and erected a rustic band-stand in the centre of the lot, about which we planted ampelopsis and bittersweet and wild clematis. These vines have since grown to such size that they completely hide the wood of which the stand is built, and make it really "a thing of beauty" in summer. In some of the open places we set out native plants—golden-rods and asters. In others we planted perennial phlox, hollyhocks, and clumps of "golden-glow" rudbeckia. Here and there, where they would show to good advantage, we made groups of hydrangea and wild roses and the white-flowered elder of the roadsides and fence-corners. In this way we secured considerable variety without the expenditure of a dollar, as all the cultivated plants we used were given us by those who had more than they had use for, and the native plants were to be had for the taking in the fields and pastures. The result of our work here was most gratifying. When we got through with "the park" it was something we were all proud of. We speak of it nowadays in a respectful and appreciative way, and we are justified in the pride we take in it, for it is a park that would be a credit to any village.

Every pleasant evening in summer the young people congregate in it, and once or twice a week the band practises there, and we all turn out to listen to it and visit with our neighbors and congratulate ourselves on the new order of things. It is natural that we should feel a sort of partnership pride in what we have done, because it has been the outgrowth of coöperation.

Each summer affords us fresh proof of the wisdom of our undertaking. Visitors from the city compliment us on the spirit of progress visible on every hand. "It doesn't look like the same place," they tell us. "You have made a model village of it, so far as outside appearances go. Your sidewalks put our city pavements to shame because of their trustworthiness. Your homes show thrift. Your

public places are kept in as tidy a condition as your homes are, and that's something that can't be said of many villages. We like it here, and we're coming again." And they keep their word, and our village is becoming quite a summer resort. So we have found that what we have done with very little inconvenience to ourselves has proved a good advertisement for the place and its people, and the present prospect is that we shall get back many times the value of the labor and money expended in improvement, for several sales of property have been made at much better figures than prevailed before we began our work. The increase in the value of real estate is directly attributable to the improvements which have been made by our society.

What we have done others may do. We have proved to our satisfaction that a large amount of money is not needed in an undertaking of this kind. Organized effort is the important thing. Of course, some money will be needed, but the sums coming in from dues will generally be found sufficient to meet all demands, unless improvements far more elaborate than ours are undertaken. If more is needed, it will be forthcoming, I am confident, for everyone will feel a personal interest and responsibility in the accomplishment of what has been undertaken, and they will not be willing to let failure result from lack of means to carry it forward to satisfactory completion.

In almost any village the young people could be enlisted in the work, and they could give entertainments for the benefit of the society and thus realize a good sum, since everybody would feel in duty bound to patronize them.

We have not been ambitious to make costly experiments. Instead, we have been satisfied to make the most of possibilities in a practical way. We have let competent men, having good taste and good judgment, plan the public work for us, and we have been sensible enough not to interfere with them or hamper them with unwise and uncalled-for suggestions which we have insisted on having adopted. Wherever and whenever this is done there will be friction. We have performed the work assigned us by those whom we have chosen to take the lead in an honest, hearty fashion, glad to do it, because we felt that it was of general as well as personal benefit. It has stimulated and strengthened our pride in the place we live in. It has made us feel, as never before, the mutuality of our interests.

But we are not so satisfied with what we have done that we feel content to fold our hands and rest on our laurels. We have other improvements in view. Our society seems to have become a permanent thing. One improvement naturally leads to another, and the work of a live Village Improvement Society like ours is a process of general evolution which may go on indefinitely.

A HAZING INTERREGNUM

SOME DOINGS AT ANNAPOLIS

By Cyrus Townsend Brady

Author of "For Love of Country," "When Blades are Out and Love's Afield," etc.



FOURTH IN THE SERIES OF COLLEGE TALES

THEY were having a high time in Room 78 in the new quarters. It was the free half hour between the close of the evening study period at half after nine o'clock and the sounding of "taps," which occurred at ten. That is, it was a free period for everybody except the "plebes," or Fourth-Class men. They were never free in the early part of their first academic year from visitations by diabolically ingenious and entirely ruthless upper-class men. The high time in Room 78 consisted of a little quiet hazing.

Robert Bird was an unusual product of one of the lumber camps of Michigan. He came of a sturdy and brave but obscure family, and had been obliged to work himself through the public schools of the little town of Darien. When he had gained an appointment to the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, after two severe competitive examinations, the joy that filled his own heart scarcely equalled the pride that his widowed mother took in his exploits,—a pride which was shared by all the inhabitants of the district in which he lived.

Bird was a big, broad-shouldered, good-humored boy, full of fun and able to enjoy a jest as much as any one, but socially he was painfully shy and timid. He would have tackled a wild-cat much more cheerfully than he would have addressed a lady,—meaning no disrespect to the lady, of course,—and the newness and strangeness of the Naval Academy filled him with unutterable awe. As he said, he had "never seen such a great city as Annapolis before, because he had never been farther than seven miles from Darien in his life."

The indefinite nature of the authority exercised by the upper-class men, his inability to distinguish an officer from a cadet, and his natural bashfulness made Bird an easy mark. For instance, when he was asked by certain bold spirits what he came to the Academy for, he replied honestly, "To fit myself to serve my country," and when, with biting sarcasm, the inquiry was put to him as to what he could do to serve his country, he answered simply, in default of anything else, that

he could die for it, he supposed, with a touch of his hardy ancestry permeating his reply, he was dumfounded to be greeted with shouts of derisive laughter and suggestions that he was probably right, that his death would be the best thing that could possibly happen for his country, and that he would better begin the process of dying immediately. He was sure when the study call sounded and they left him alone that they were right, and so far as he was concerned, he was so miserable that he had no objections to offer.

It had been impressed upon him by an old soldier who lived in the village that he would probably meet with rough handling, and that he would better take it coolly, as it would then soon be discontinued; that there was one thing that he could not do, and that was to fight against the enmity and dislike of the upper-class men. It had also been drummed into his ear that the basic requirement of the service was obedience, and that he ought to obey everybody over him—in the Navy as well as in the Lord.

He had not learned, as I say, to discriminate, and consequently he carried out the commands of the hazers with a promptness and fidelity which wearied them of the attempt to "run" him, as the phrase went, so they presently left him alone, there being no amusement in the acquiescence of the willing. In fact, some of the older men espoused him, as was the custom, and gave him such assistance as would serve to initiate him into the academic customs and practices.

Unfortunately, however, a foolish article appeared in the *Darien Argus* of which he was the subject, and came to light at the Academy. The local scribbler had indulged in heroics, and one phrase of his diatribe against the prevalent practice of hazing at the Academy naturally took the fancy of the cadets. It ran something like this:

"The brutal hazers would not dare to try their cowardly tricks on the brawny son of Darien!"

The whole Academy swooped down on "Balboa"—they called him that from a vague association of ideas with the Isthmus—en masse. He was forced to read the article aloud for the delectation of the multitude so often that he grew to know it by heart. It finally occurred to one original genius that the delivery would be much more striking if Balboa should say it standing on his head.

The cadet to whom this idea had occurred was a little fellow—just up to the regulation size. He was a first-class man and would graduate the following June. Many things depended on his graduation. He too came from a humble family, but one with good American blood in its veins. He stood at the head of his class, and was Cadet-Lieutenant-Commander of the battalion, the highest cadet officer of the school. Rumor whispered that he was engaged to the daughter of the

superintendent. Failing his profession as a naval officer he had nothing: in that he might hope to shine brilliantly should any opportunity of distinction ever present itself. It was a foolish thing, therefore, for him to jeopardize his material prospects and his love-affair as well by indulging in the practice of hazing.

When he directed Bird to stand on his head and recite the infernal doggerel, the big fellow hesitated.

"By jinks!" he said, "if it was anybody but you, Mr. Thayer, I wouldn't do it. Fun's fun, but this is too much. I've just about had enough of it, and if you were my size, I'd fight you; but you're too little for me, if you are the Cadet-Lieutenant-Commander: I could eat you up!"

Thayer's face flushed.

"Look here, Mr. Bird," he said, "never you mind about my size,"—it was a sore point with him,—"you just scramble down on your head and say your little piece, and bear a hand about it, or we'll settle it right here. I'm quite big enough to fight, you will find."

"Hold on, Thayer, the plebe's right," said one of the other men; "you are no match for him, but I am. I'll tackle him in your place. Now, Mr. Bird——"

"No, you don't, Emery," answered Thayer stubbornly, "I'm doing this 'running' myself. Will you get down, or will you not get down, plebe?"

"Oh, I'll get down all right," answered Bird wrathfully, and then he turned to Emery. "I'm doin' it, I want you to know, because he's too little to fight, but after I am done with him, if you want to try to make me do it, why, you just can!"

Thayer stamped his foot in rage.

"I want no more of this back talk!" he shouted, with all the imperiousness of his four stripes; whereupon Bird, with rebellion in his heart and a determination that he would take vengeance on Emery, who, to do him credit, seemed in no wise disconcerted by the prospect, dropped his head and hands on the floor, lifted his big feet in the air, and began, in the most sepulchral and disgusted tones, to remark that "The brutal hazers would not dare to try their cowardly tricks on the brawny son of Darien!"

The situation was so strained that there was no humor in it, but before the affair was terminated there came a sudden interruption. A hand was laid upon the door. The clinking of a sword betrayed the advent of the officer-in-charge. Before the door was opened one of the cadets turned off the light, and the three hazers scrambled through the window and disappeared on the balcony before the officer-in-charge saw who they were. Bird dropped down ungracefully and scrambled up to his feet with a very red face and saluted the officer. He was

humiliated at having been caught in such an attitude, but he was too new at the Academy to understand the serious predicament in which he had become involved. A match was struck and the gas lighted.

"Well, sir," demanded the officer-in-charge, "what were you doing when I came in?"

"I was reciting a piece, sir," said Bird.

"Oh, you were, were you? What was the piece?"

"I—I don't like to tell you, sir," replied the abashed boy.

"I am not inquiring as to your likes and dislikes, Mr. Bird. You will obey my orders."

Very reluctantly Bird repeated the statement which damnable reiteration had made so loathsome to him. The officer bit his lip to hide a smile as he remarked,—

"That's what you were saying, was it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was that all you were doing?"

"No, sir."

"What else?"

"I was standing on my head, sir."

"Were you taught to recite pieces in that way?"

"No, sir."

"Well, what were you doing it just now for?"

Silence.

"Who were those cadets in the room?—those who escaped through the window?"

Still silence.

"In short, Mr. Bird, you were being hazed, weren't you?"

No answer.

"Come, sir, I require an answer! You surely were not standing on your head in the corner of the room reciting that ridiculous monologue for your own amusement! It was hazing, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir," answered Bird.

"Aha! Who did it?"

Again no answer.

"Mr. Bird, your conduct is contumacious and disobedient, sir. You will answer me immediately, or I will report you for being hazed, for not resenting an insult, and for disobedience of orders."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the dismayed cadet in his heart, but he made no reply.

"For the last time, will you tell me?"

"No, sir, I can't," answered the unfortunate youth.

The next day the unfortunate son of Darien was reported for about half the crimes in the midshipman's decalogue. It was noticed that the voice of Cadet-Lieutenant-Commander Thayer, who was charged

with the duty of reading the reports at the dinner formation, trembled slightly when he came to that portion, and that he did not rattle off the catalogue of offences with his usual disdainful fluency. Bird, in due course, was summoned before the Commandant-of-Cadets, and by him referred to the superintendent, and by the superintendent to a Board of Investigation.

Hazing had been prevalent at the Academy that fall, and the authorities were determined to stamp it out—forever, if possible, or for the time being, at any rate. Bird found he was in a terrible situation. He had steadfastly refused to give the name of the man who had hazed him, and was then threatened with dismissal from the Academy. Also, in spite of his pleadings, the charge which really hurt him worse than anything else, namely, that he had not resented an insult, was still allowed to stand. The superintendent, with the report of the Board of Investigation before him,—which Board had elicited nothing, by the way,—was in a furious mood. The usually genial old Admiral was not a man to be balked at best, and Bird had a dreadful quarter of an hour when he was called before him.

In unsparing terms the Admiral pointed out to him the consequences of his action—dismissal from the Academy, the termination of an honorable and distinguished career, and the blighting of all his hopes. As he listened to the stern, cold words of the old man, the boy's mind went back to the little town of Darien and to that old mother and the pride she had taken in his hard-earned appointment. He felt again the joy of his friends and acquaintances, the simple folk of the town. He realized what his dismissal would mean to them, and yet he could not tell. His boyish notion of honor would not permit him to betray a school-mate.

The old Admiral at last descended to plead and reason with him, pointing out to him how unmanly was the practice of hazing, and how his duty demanded that he should do his best to break it up, that the cadets themselves ought to help him; but he did not move the boy. There was something in his unshakable determination that was in itself admirable, and though the Admiral was bitterly disappointed in his refusal, he could not but respect the tenacity with which he clung to his idea of honor, and in a burst of generosity he agreed to withdraw the charge of cowardice. That was some consolation—but not much.

Bird went back to his quarters after the interview with the certainty of dismissal before him and with the saddest heart in the world. He sat down alone in the little, bare room and buried his head in his hands and wept. He had not seen Thayer since the night of the hazing, and he scorned to appeal to him. The making of a knight of olden time was in that boy.

•

As far as Thayer was concerned, he was scarcely less miserable than Bird. He knew his duty, yet so much was at stake—his commission in the navy, his whole future, his sweetheart; he believed the Admiral would never give his daughter to a man dishonorably dismissed from the service for hazing or for any other cause. Therefore he did not speak. He did not realize how serious the matter had become for his victim, however, and consequently, when the conduct report and orders were handed him that day at dinner formation, he was petrified with astonishment and remorse when he came across the following:

“By the direction of the superintendent the charge of cowardice against Cadet Midshipman Bird of the Fourth Class is withdrawn, but Cadet Midshipman Bird, having submitted to hazing and having refused to reveal the names of those who hazed him, by the direction of the Board of Inquiry is recommended to the Secretary of the Navy for dismissal from the Naval Academy and the Naval Service. Pending the result of this recommendation, Cadet Midshipman Bird will be quartered in solitary confinement on the United States ship *Santee*.”

It was an awful punishment, such as had not been known at the Academy under the circumstances, but the superintendent was determined to stamp out hazing, and had resorted to this drastic measure in the first case which had come to his attention. As Thayer read the paper, his voice faltered more and more. It so happened that the Admiral and the Commandant-of-Cadets had strolled across the grounds and were standing back of the Cadet-Lieutenant-Commander, overlooking dinner formation. As Thayer finished the reading of this fearful order he stopped. There was a moment of painful silence.

“Go on with the reading of the other orders, Mr. Thayer,” remarked the officer-in-charge in great surprise.

The consequences of his action had flashed before the young cadet in that moment of hesitation. He made up his mind, like a man, that he would do his duty, come what might.

“Sir,” he said, raising his voice so that it was audible to the whole battalion, and the Admiral and Commandant as well, as he turned on his heel and saluted the officer-in-charge, “I cannot allow this to go any further. I will relieve Cadet Midshipman Bird at all hazards. I am the man whose name he has refused to give, who was hazing him last Tuesday night.”

A gasp of astonishment ran through the motionless ranks of the cadets. The adjutant from his position on the right of the battalion suddenly stepped to the front, faced about, and lifted his hand.

“Three cheers,” he cried in a voice that could have been heard all over the Academy, “for Cadets Thayer and Bird!”

The officer-in-charge judiciously waited until the emotion of the cadets had found vent in the three cheers and a tiger before he took action, then, after a whispered word or two with the Admiral, he stated that the orders regarding Cadet Bird were suspended for the present, and that Cadet Thayer was to report at the superintendent's office under arrest.

"My boy," said the old Admiral, when Thayer presented himself before him, "that was nobly done. By Gad, sir, it was as brave a thing as I ever saw! I have got to report you to the Secretary of the Navy, and I have no doubt but that you will lose your commission, but I want to say to you that I think more highly of you than I ever did."

"Miss—Miss Janet, sir. I suppose this will end it all?"

"No, sir, it will not. I shall be proud to have you for my son-in-law, even if you were such a young fool, and if she does not agree with me, I'll—I'll——"

"Oh, thank you, Admiral!" broke in Thayer, not waiting for the dire conclusion of the Admiral's threat. "Give me time, sir, and if I am not to serve Uncle Sam I will show you—— But there, I won't boast."

"A deputation of cadets from the three upper classes of the Academy with Cadet Midshipman Bird of the Fourth Class, with permission of the Commandant to see the Admiral, sir," interrupted the marine orderly at this moment.

"Show them in, orderly. You may remain, Mr. Thayer. Well, what is it, young gentlemen?" asked the Admiral.

"Sir," said the spokesman of the party, the ranking First-Class man of the group, "we held a meeting of the cadets after dinner to-day, and it was unanimously resolved by the three upper classes, the plebes—I beg your pardon, sir, the Fourth Class—naturally concurring with us, to do away with hazing and running so long as we are at the Academy, and we hope, in consideration of this and of the heroic conduct of Cadet-Lieutenant-Commander Thayer and Cadet Midshipman Bird, that you—that—you—would—er—— In short, won't you ask the Secretary of the Navy to pass it by this time, sir?"

"Young gentlemen," said the Admiral, his weather-beaten face flushing with pleasure, "your conduct does you honor, but it is what I might expect from the future officers of the United States Navy, especially with such examples of sailorly honor before them as that of the two young gentlemen in question. Tell your class-mates I will see what can be done with the Secretary of the Navy, and all punishments incurred on this occasion will be suspended until I receive his orders. Mr. Thayer, you are relieved from arrest. Mr. Bird, you are not to go to the Santee. Mr. Thayer, you may take command of the battalion once more; and let me tell you one thing, sir, that

no man can command other men until he has learned to command himself. That's all."

A chorus of "Thank you, sir," arose from the little body of cadets, which was rudely broken by the Admiral.

"That will do!" he cried peremptorily. "Be off with you! Shake a leg!"

And that is the origin of the intimacy between Cadets Thayer and Bird, and that is how hazing was stopped at the Academy—for a certain period in its history, at least.



THE PIPERS OF THE POOLS

BY CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

PIPERS of the chilly pools,
Pipe the April in ;
Summon all the singing hosts,
All the wilding kin.

Then a wonder shall appear,
Miracle of time :
Up through root and germ and sap-wood,
Life shall climb and climb.

Through the cool and teeming damp
Of the twilight air,
Call till all the April children
Answer everywhere.

Then the hiding things shall hear you
And the sleeping stir,
And the far-off troops of exile
Gather to confer ;

From your cold and fluting throats
Pipe the world awake,
Pipe the mould to move again,
Pipe the sod to break.

Then the rain shall kiss the bud
And the sun the bee,—
Till they all, the painted children,
Wing by flower get free ;

Pipe the mating song of earth,
And the fecund fire,—
Love and laughter, pang and dream,
Desire, desire, desire.

And amid the shining grass
Ephemera arise,
And the windflowers in the hollow
Open starry eyes ;

And delight comes in to whisper—
"Soon, soon, soon,
Earth shall be but one wild blossom
Breathing to the moon."

BEES IN ROYAL BONNETS

By F. L. Oswald, M.D.



AT the recent convention of a Vienna medical association the experts in mental disorders specified "fear" and "disappointment" as the two most prolific causes of insanity, with a minority vote giving preëminence to the "after-effects of family bereavements."

Both conclusions would, however, seem to confirm the suggestive theory of the philosopher Oken, that the "eclipse of reason serves the purpose of preventing self-destruction by veiling the memory of irremediable sorrows." It might be interesting to know if the tragedies of shipwreck, mining disasters, etc., are apt to lead to such consequences; but the Vienna specialists apparently failed to record their verdict upon the prevalence of mental derangements considered in connection with special pursuits—unless the results of their deliberations should have been suppressed by the government censor.

For there is no doubt that the spectre of insanity is a goblin of aristocratic predilections. Like Death, it loves a shining mark, and like Gout, prefers a castle to a cottage; but its favorite haunts have always been the palaces of kings. More than eighteen hundred years ago the author of the daring satire known as the "Apocolocyntosis" described lunacy in the guise of an earwig skipping about the perfumed pillow of autocrats, and last summer the littérateur Harden took his life in his hands by calling attention to the taint of insanity, as the result of consanguineous marriages, in not less than fourteen different reigning families of Europe.



Dynasties descended from a long lineage of legitimate despots are, indeed, notoriously apt to perish by degeneration, but the causes of dementation in diadems can hardly be limited to the influence of hereditary predispositions. Vespasianus, a novus homo and a man of strong common-sense, was the immediate ancestor of the monster Domitian. Rudolph II. of Germany, the son of a rough-and-ready old war-Kaiser, was so undoubtedly crazy that his deposition was prevented only by his harmlessness and the influence of the feudal barons, who preferred a King Log to a meddling reformer. In his favorite

summer palace near Prague he collected a museum of absurd knick-knacks, including cartloads of objects that no junk-dealer would have purchased at a dollar a ton. His Majesty was fond of solitary rambles, and nearly always returned with a cargo of preposterous sundries: misshapen rocks, pine-knots, glossy pebbles, big mushrooms that defiled his hunting-pouch with acrid slime, gall-apples, chunks of gnarled roots, bones, and what not.

His selection of confidants was equally remarkable. In 1585 he promoted an assistant of his gardener to the position of privy-councillor and refused to sanction measures of political importance without the concurrence of his domestic oracle, who before long had to employ a staff of financiers to manage the investment of his bribes. The ex-cabbage-planter also had good sense enough to consult professional diplomatists, and things were just getting into smooth running order when his Majesty transferred his trust to an illiterate ostler, who was garnished with a long string of titles, and who promptly caused the arrest of his predecessor.

◆

The Emperor Caligula, who went a step further by conferring consular honor upon his horse, was the son of the hero Germanicus, the most deservedly popular man of the Roman Empire; and the genealogical alternation of demigods and drivellers is so frequent a phenomenon that the hereditary abilities of a lineage would almost seem to exhaust themselves in the production of a superlative talent. Peter the Great's son was an imbecile, the Duke of Reichstadt's stupidity exhausted the patience of his teachers, and Marcus Aurelius, a combined Plato and Aristides upon the throne of the world, afflicted that world by the procreation of the tiger-baboon Commodus.

And no other hypothesis can be made to account for the genealogical legitimacy of William the Witless, the Bombastes Furioso of the nineteenth century. His father was, all in all, the noblest descendant of the House of Hohenzollern,—so much so, indeed, that his untimely end was the decree of Nemesis that offset a run of good luck unparalleled in the history of the Germanic nations. "I'm quits with Fortune," said old Kaiser Wilhelm when he learned the doom of his eldest son; "it looks as if Fate couldn't dismiss a discarded favorite without a stab to the heart." The old soldier knew the value of the invalid that was taking his farewell of earth in the hills of San Remo, and his eyes were still keen enough to see clear through the addle-pate of his probable successor.

◆

Pathologists have often pointed out the fact that physical and mental enervation are apt to go hand in hand, and the intellectual

degeneracy of etiquette monarchs may have a good deal to do with the Sybaritism of their palace life.

"I farm two hundred acres,—*vicariously*, of course," says Charles Reade's real-estate magnate; "nobody around here has brains enough to do anything himself. That weakness is confined to our American cousins, and they suffer for it by outfighting, outlying, outmanœuvring, outbullying, and outwitting us wherever we encounter them."

The plebeian functions which mediæval sovereigns were obliged to perform by proxy included the adjustment of their gala-gloves. They had flunkies to remove their cravats and warm their night-shirts, unplait their pigtails, and tuck up their bedclothes around their shoulders. In the morning courtiers competed for the honor of holding their washbasin; peers of the realm waited on bended knees to buckle their shoes. If the inheritor of a legitimate throne lifted a spoon to break an egg, lynx-eyed lackeys anticipated his needs with the agility of trained conjurers. If he intimated a desire to break the Seventh Commandment, calligraphic secretaries wrote his love-letters. Like his food, his information on current topics was served ready dressed and cooked, till he turned into a masticating-machine and repeater of conventional twaddle.

Hence that portentous series of tallow-heads that provoked revolts under the reign of the Georges, the Bourbons, and the Hapsburgs. The divine right of the first-born was still a firmly established dogma, but to a self-respecting idolater even devil-worship is less odious than calf-worship. A South American loyalist, who went to Spain to offer his services to Charles IV., returned with clenched teeth and the resolve of sedition when he found His Majesty embroidering a petticoat for the holy image of Ildefonso. The proud Polack nobles contrived to pardon the usurpations of Frederick the Great, who did not rely on prosecuting attorneys to

"Try conclusions with his Janizaries,
And show them what an intellectual war is,"

but rather than endure the despotism of his brainless successor, scores of them left their country altogether to pitch their tents in the camp of the Corsican Cæsar. Their national hero, Sobieski, flew to the rescue of the Austrian Emperor with the enthusiasm of a primitive Crusader, but almost repented his successful charge on the wagonburg of the Grand Vizier when he was informed that the man whom he had saved from imminent ruin could not receive him till the preliminary ceremonies had been discussed in a convention of duly accredited commissioners. A Portuguese patriot committed suicide when he found himself reduced to the alternative of accepting the ultimatum

of the Spanish invaders or serving a sovereign who had dawdled away two precious weeks by hesitating to sign the appointment of a first-class strategist without the sanction of his court-confessor.

Compared with the rule of such pumpkinheads, the iron despotism of the Romanoffs looks almost respectable; but the stoutest armor-plates are apt to come to grief in a collision with a submerged torpedo, and the dread of anarchism, with its panoply of infernal machines, has unsettled minds that would have weathered the storm and stress of campaigns like those of the Seven Years' War. Not overwork, but the dread of assassination, evolved those nightmare visions that disturbed the slumbers of Peter the Great and haunted the father of the present Czar till his attendants had to guard him against the temptation of self-destruction. An inherited nervousness of the same kind also embittered the life of James I. and goaded him to seek relief in absurdities that would have consigned a less irresponsible patient to a rubber-cell. Just three hundred years earlier an English autocrat (Edward II.) had to be deposed to save the nation from the odium of being ruled by a lunatic. Up to the time of his coronation his conduct had been as exemplary as that of most heirs-apparent, and the first six months of his reign were devoted to reforms, but then came five successive revolts of the barons, while Europe from end to end was convulsed by an unprecedented series of murderous insurrections. Albert of Austria was assassinated by his nephew; Roger de Flor by the garrison of Adrianople; Gessler by William Tell; the Grandmaster of the Templars by his own sovereign; the King of Granada deposed by his stepson, after deposing and murdering his father; the King of Sweden suppressing a mutiny by the execution of half a hundred ringleaders, including two of his brothers; Michael, sovereign Duke of Russia, slain by the Khan of Kapzak,—all within five or six years,—while Edward's barons were caught in about as many different conspiracies. The King's daily dread of murder began to affect his health, and in 1312, a few weeks after the execution of his favorite, Gaveston, his mind gave way altogether. He would lock himself up and talk to his visions for hours together. By way of answering his own questions he would change his intonation, and his frightened courtiers often thought they heard the voice of Gaveston. After dark he haunted the vacant halls of the old palace, the fuel-shed of a garden-house, and other places where he thought himself safe from the pursuit of his enemies, and several times was seen in the morning climbing up the park hill, with his shoes covered with mud, as if he had returned from a distant excursion.

His mistrust of his attendants at last became a monomania, and but for the restraining influence of an able-bodied relative he would have attempted to anticipate conspiracies by wholesale executions.

The insanities of the Cæsars may be traced to a similar cause, and

their mistrust of friends and foes admits of some excuse if we remember the multitudinous sources of discontent, and the fact that of the first forty rulers of the Western Empire twenty-three actually perished by assassination. The most sanguinary modern battles would give a combatant a better chance of survival.

◆

Military veterans, indeed, often manage to forget their peril and keep the even tenor of their regulation step to the tune of exploding shells, but a traveller picking his way through a wilderness wriggling with snappish rattlesnakes can hardly be blamed for getting finally distracted to the degree of snatching up a club and smashing away madly at every rustling bush.

And serpents in the path of empire have not died out with paganism. Prince Wallenstein lost faith in human counsellors and sought help in astrology, and in 1745 Charles Albert of Bavaria was betrayed by France, Austria, Prussia, Poland, and the Germanic Confederation, and renounced his life, together with his claim to the throne of the Kaisers. That year of terrors probably conjured up the spectres that have stalked through the halls of the Wittelsbach dynasty ever since, and within the last ten years have driven three of their victims to an untimely death.

King Ludwig's misanthropy suggested the plan of those strange Alpine castles which he proposed to exchange for his metropolitan residence as soon as he could deputize his power in a way to suit his notions of safety, and where he would probably have expended the larger part of his revenues in fortifications, for during the last six months of his reign he shunned the eyes of mankind as anxiously as Dr. Jekyll in the critical stage of his Hydean transformation. The Regency Commissioners sent in copy after copy of their exhortatorium, but had finally to capture him by force and at the serious risk of provoking a tragedy before he had left his bedroom den. In his lake-side retreat he planned escape with all the furtive cunning of lunatics and gave his keepers no end of scares. A grin of self-congratulation rested on his features when they pulled his body from the lake: he had succeeded in outwitting one of his persecutors.

His kinsman, Prince Rudolph of Austria, had inherited his mother's restlessness without her taste for belles-lettres, or, indeed, for letters of any kind, with the occasional exception of amatory epistles. There were days when his best acquaintances (he had no friends) were afraid to approach him, and when his servants knew that intrusion would provoke him to a storm of savage invectives. Ever since his cynical confession of his insults to his Belgian bride his reason was known to be clouded, and there is hardly any doubt that he committed suicide under the gathering shadows of its total eclipse.

"Well, you'll have to hurry up, then," he told Prince Louis Esterhazy, who wanted to prepare a memorandum for the purpose of obtaining the consensus of his Vienna patrons on some building project in 1893; "if you wait till winter, my own *sensus* might be gone by that time."

His poor mother flew through Europe at the rate of eight thousand miles a year, "fleeing from the dread of King Ludwig's fate," as a Munich editor expressed it, but only succeeded in getting the pursuing spectre forestalled by a year or two. She had been under constant surveillance since the day of the Meyringen tragedy, and her husband connived at her *parforce* travels only because Dr. von Ebing told him that an attempt at restraint would result in an outbreak of raving madness. Like the fabled victims of the Italian tarantula, she had to keep moving, till the dagger of a fellow-maniac cured a disorder for which medicine had no remedy.



The throne of the Hapsburgs has been occupied by half a dozen madcaps, that of the Hohenzollerns by at least three, since the death of the Great Elector. In Russia, as in ancient Rome, about every other Cæsar seems to provoke the attention of the Quixote killer, and in Italy eccentricity in purple was once so prevalent that Peter Aretino proposed to make the use of hellebore a royal prerogative. Spain, once the favorite of the Fortuna prodiga, has been systematically ruined by crowned cranks.

But in France the imminent risk of a similar experience seems to have cured the worshippers of Cæsarism, and it might be seriously questioned if all the possible "benefits of benevolent absolutism," together with the advantages of the most liberal constitutional monarchy, can outweigh the perils incident to the rule of a constitutional lunatic. For the consequences of that affliction may not be limited to a single age or nation. A.D. 27 a Roman chemist offered the Emperor Tiberius the patent of a process for "producing a metal whiter than silver, cheaper than iron, and lighter than wood," but fearing an infringement of more profitable monopolies, the unspeakable old savage ordered the execution of the inventor, and thus probably deprived the world of a recipe for manufacturing aluminum at a penny a pound.

The royal dotard who effected the expulsion of the industrious Moors doomed Southern Spain to a state of perhaps irremediable desolation and infested Northern Africa with legions of vendetta fiends.

The war-mania of Charles XII. led to complications that provoked the partition of Poland, besides depriving Sweden of two fertile provinces, and the insane tyranny of Ferdinand II. sowed the seeds that infested Southern Italy with the tares of anarchism

THE ENTERPRISE OF FLORA

By Francis Gribble

*Author of "The Things that Matter," "The Lower Life," "The Red Spell,"
"Sunlight and Limelight," "Only an Angel," etc.*



I.

THE first chapter of the romance took place at the Daffodil Rooms. Perhaps you know them; perhaps you don't. It depends upon who you are, and how you take your pleasures, and whether you are a diligent student of the advertisement columns of a sporting paper. On the whole, it may be useful to explain.

The Daffodil Rooms, then, is the name of a certain Dancing Academy standing in a by-street about a quarter of a mile from Oxford Circus. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays a professor instructs mixed classes of young men and maidens in the valse, the lancers, the Highland schottische, the "Barn Dance," and whatever else is the fashionable saltatory diversion of the hour. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays the same professor becomes a master of the ceremonies and presides over a subscription ball. You go there in morning dress, with your pumps in your overcoat pocket, and pay a shilling for admission at the door. A thoroughly respectable place, though not, of course, a resort of the nobility and gentry. Yet it was because a gentleman went there, and made the acquaintance of a girl who was obviously a lady, that this story came to be written.

His name was Clarence Deacon, and he was an artist with a studio in Fitzroy Square. A long day's labor at black-and-white work had left him tired and in need of some distraction. Having no engagement for the evening, he had strolled round to the Daffodil Rooms with the idea of dancing with a shop-girl. Many shop-girls, he knew, dance excellently, and sometimes their conversation is amusing. But while he lounged in the door-way, examining possible partners with a critical eye, his attention was arrested by the one girl in all the assembly who could by no possibility be taken for a shop-girl.

She was passably, though not superlatively, pretty, her features being too irregular for perfect beauty. Her hair and eyes were dark; her chin was finely chiselled; her mouth was a little larger than it should have been; her figure was slight but well-proportioned,—her

dress, of cheap material, but well cut, showed it to advantage. At the moment she sat alone on a divan at the farther end of the room. The young clerks and shop assistants who formed the bulk of the clientèle of the Dancing Academy seemed afraid to speak to her, lest they should be snubbed; so obvious was it, even to them, that she was a being from another social sphere.

"Who is she?" Clarence Deacon asked the M. C., as he returned from the organization of a set of lancers.

"I don't know. I've never seen her here before," that gentleman replied.

"Rather different from most of your young ladies, isn't she?"

"I won't say that. I teach young ladies in all classes of society. You'd be perfectly surprised if I were to tell you——"

"Tell me another time. This young lady wants a partner."

"Shall I introduce you?"

"Don't trouble; I'll introduce myself." For Clarence Deacon knew that the etiquette of Daffodil Hall permitted this. So he worked his way round the room, behind the backs of those who danced the lancers, and made his best bow and said,—

"I wonder if you'd be angry if I asked you for a dance."

The girl laughed encouragingly,—

"You can't find out without asking, can you?" she replied.

"Then will you give me the next?"

"With pleasure."

Then he sat down beside her and talked. Her conversation—the tone of her voice as well as the things she said—confirmed the impression that by no possibility could she be a shop-girl. She chattered away exactly like the ladies whom he was used to meet in London drawing-rooms,—only rather more brightly and intelligently than most of them. Who and what, then, could she be? The mystery seemed worth pursuing.

"Shall we dance now?" he asked presently, and she took his arm for the valse.

And after the valse came a polka, and after the polka another valse. Though her dancing was no more than moderate, Clarence Deacon kept her for his partner throughout the evening, sitting out a goodly proportion of the numbers in the refreshment-room, where, by the subdued light of Chinese lanterns, she drank a cup of coffee, and he a whiskey-and-soda, fetched by the waiter from the adjoining public house. It is the usual practice at the Daffodil Rooms when people find that they are getting on well together.

Her name, she told him, was Bond—Flora Bond, and she lived with a girl friend in lodgings in Islington, a quarter where lodgings are cheap. But, though he was allowed to squeeze her hand without

discouragement, he got no further confidences from her until he actually fished for them. And then she made admissions which astonished him.

It was towards midnight, when the rooms were thinning, and he had asked leave to see her home.

"No, thanks," she said. "I shall be quite safe if you'll put me in a cab."

He did not press her. Perhaps her landlady was censorious; perhaps she did not wish him to see in what a humble place she lived. On either alternative her wish ought to be respected.

"But," he urged, "I shall be awfully disappointed if I don't see you again. I hope you'll let me."

Flora looked down and smiled.

"Yes, I'll let you see me," she replied.

"I may call?"

"Oh, no, you mustn't call! I'm never at home at calling hours. But you may come and see me all the same."

"Where, then?"

"At the Royal Aquarium."

"What! You're on the stage there?"

"No, I'm not clever enough for that. Guess again."

"Then I suppose you——"

But he had to stop, not knowing what guess to offer, and she filled up the blank and told him,—

"I keep one of the fancy stalls at the Aquarium."

Clarence Deacon started, and Flora Bond took an unfair advantage of him, saying, with a challenge in her eyes:

"So you're disappointed. You've been talking to me all the evening under the impression that I was a lady, and now——"

The young man met the challenge fairly.

"I am still under the impression that you are a lady," he replied. Flora only laughed.

"Nonsense!" she said. "I gave up being a lady when I gave up being a governess. Nowadays I'm only a common girl who sells photograph frames and match-boxes for a living. When you want one, you can come and patronize me. Now go and call me a hansom."

So they said good-night and separated, and Clarence Deacon soliloquized as he walked home to Fitzroy Square:

"What an extraordinary girl! She's a lady as sure as I'm alive, though it's the first time I ever heard of a lady keeping a stall at the Royal Aquarium. And nothing of the reduced gentlewoman about her either. That would have put me off at once. As it is—well, as it is, I shall go and buy a match-box to-morrow afternoon."

II.

THE second chapter of the romance took place at Westminster and was spread over a considerable period of time.

It began on the day when Clarence Deacon, dressed carefully, as for a garden party or a morning call, found Flora Bond at her stall, and raised his hat, and shook hands, and, after preliminary greetings, asked,—

“Now, what would you like me to buy?”

Her answer was as charming as it was unexpected.

“Nothing, please,” she said. “The industry is a swindle, and I refuse to swindle my friends.”

Only a lady, Clarence felt, would have been capable of this delicacy of feeling. And how piquant to meet such delicacy among such singular surroundings.

“Since you receive me as a friend, I shall ask you to let me take you out to tea,” he said.

She pretended to hesitate, asking whether he really thought he knew her quite well enough for that. He replied evasively that the cakes were very good at Niagara, and that he knew that all girls liked cakes.

“Then I’ll come,” she said; and she came; and the time passed pleasantly,—the more pleasantly for Clarence Deacon in that he fancied he saw another man glaring at him angrily as he carried off his prize in triumph.

“May I regard this tea-party as a precedent for others?” the young man asked when the time came for Flora to go back and sell match-boxes in the dearest market.

“I never make promises, but you can come and try,” was Flora’s answer; and he came and tried—and succeeded—not once, but several times.

The girl puzzled him like a difficult conundrum. She had all the gayety—and much of the archness—of the common girls at the other stalls, but not a trace of their vulgarity. Occasionally her eyes might have a passing look of pathos that seemed to ask for sympathy. More usually her manner was that of a high-spirited young woman perfectly trained in the conventions of society,—a young woman who knew the better but, for the fun of the thing, pursued the worse. Even if she had been plain, the riddle would have piqued him. As she was pretty, it soon grew to be the great desire of his life to gain her confidence and learn her story.

And one day at Niagara she told him her story,—and not her story only, but her views of life as well.

“I think you find me rather a mystery, don’t you?” she began.

"The most charming of all mysteries," he assented.

"And if the mystery were solved, the charm would all be gone, and you would feel no interest in me any more?"

Clarence indignantly protested; his protest had all the air of being genuine.

"I'm not sure that I believe you," said Flora, "but I'll take the risk."

And she put cream and sugar in his tea, and told him how she had come to be the mistress of a fancy stall at the Aquarium.

She was an orphan; her father had been an officer; her only living relatives were an aunt and some cousins in the country; she had no friends in London. Three years since her home had been broken up, and she had been obliged to earn her living. She knew nothing; consequently there was no alternative open to her but to teach.

"I came to town," she said, "and became a visiting governess, and lived at Stonor House."

Clarence Deacon nodded. He had heard of Stonor House, the philanthropic home, near the Tottenham Court Road, where governesses, type-writers, Post-Office girls, and so forth, lived herded together in a kind of barracks, sleeping in cubicles, and oppressed by rigid rules of discipline. Passing the door at times, he had seen some of them come out, and had noticed how badly they were dressed, and how exceedingly miserable they looked.

In a few picturesque words Flora sketched the life that these girls lived,—its monotony, its hopelessness, its continual humiliations. They knew no one; they were invited nowhere; they bored each other. Their youth was passing without any of the joys of youth; its horizon was only a solitary undignified old age.

"I bore it for two years," Flora said, "and then I revolted and came here."

"You revolted?"

He feared a revelation which should put his esteem to the test, but there was none.

"I felt that I could not go on living unless there were more color in my life. I got to find out too that the girls of what we called the lower classes had more color—more real enjoyment—in their lives than we who pretended to be ladies. So I made up my mind to step down from my pedestal of gentility and join them. Don't you think that I was wise?"

"I don't know," said Clarence doubtfully.

"But I know. The other life was gray. This may not be an ideal life, but there is color in it."

"Color?" he repeated.

She laughed as she explained,—

"Fun, amusement, rational human intercourse, flirtations, and little tea-parties like this."

Then it was his turn to laugh, and hers to add,—

"A girl can't keep young unless she flirts, you know, and at Stonor House I never had the chance of flirting."

"But——"

"But you think it isn't dignified to flirt with people one hasn't been introduced to. That's the worst of it, of course. Only most girls will tell you it's better to flirt on those terms than not to flirt at all. Still——"

"Still?"

"Still, if you really think me undignified, I sha'n't let you take me to Niagara any more."

Whereat he protested that, so far from thinking her undignified, he thought her charming—more charming every time he met her; and the net result of their talk was yet another meditation.

"Wonderful pluck a girl must have to sink the lady and take the fancy stall in order to get more fun out of life. And, 'pon my word, I don't see why one should look down on her for doing it, any more than one looks down on a man, when he's cornered, for sinking the gentleman and joining the Mounted Police."

And later, after various intervening meditations,—

"They say it's a rash thing to marry a girl whom one picks up casually in a public place. My people would be furious enough at the idea. But—hang it all!—when it's a girl like that——"

III.

THE third chapter of the romance took place in a church and a vestry; and the wedding, as it was very much like any other wedding, has no particular claim to be described. But there is a certain honeymoon conversation which is worth recording.

They were at Berck-sur-Mer,—a wild place, all sea and sand-hills, on the coast of Picardy,—and while they lounged on the dunes, under the shelter of an umbrella tent, Clarence, between two caresses, asked a question:

"Tell me the truth, dear. Didn't it surprise you to find a real lover—a lover pour le bon motif—after you had shocked all your friends by opening your stall at the Aquarium?"

Flora laughed,—softly, fondly, yet with a touch of pride at her superior knowledge of the secret springs which rule the cause of human action.

"Silly boy!" she said. "Seeing how clever men are, it's wonderful how little they understand themselves."

"What do you mean, Flora?"

"I mean, dear, that when I left off being a lady I was doing just the one thing that made it almost certain that I should find such a lover."

He tried to find a personal reference in her words.

"Of course," he said, "if I hadn't met you there, or at the Daffodil Rooms, I probably shouldn't have met you at all."

But Flora laughed again.

"You might have, dear," she said. "But that's not the important point. The important point is that, even if you had met me, you wouldn't have fallen in love with me."

"Flora, wherever I might have met you——" He kissed her, as was right and proper, but when he had finished she continued:

"No, dear, you would never have fallen in love with me then. I was a dowdy little music-teacher. My boots were dreadful; my gloves were dreadful; I had to wear ugly hats that the rain wouldn't spoil; I was unhappy and discontented; my face had got a look of despair through always thinking of the future. That isn't the sort of girl that a young man falls in love with, Clarence."

He admitted that this was so, and she went on:

"But when a young man goes to a place like the Daffodil Rooms or the Royal Aquarium, and meets a lady where he only expected to meet a common girl, he is piqued by the mystery and wants to see her again; and when he does see her again, he gets jealous when he finds that he isn't the only man who admires her, and this is the beginning of flirtation."

"But flirtation isn't——"

"Flirtation isn't the same thing as love, of course. But people who end by falling in love always begin by flirting, and if a girl never flirts she will never fall in love."

"But——"

"But it needs courage to marry a girl from a fancy stall. Of course it does. But when a man is in love—and when he knows that the girl is in love too—he's generally brave enough. Why, men like you, when they fall in love, will marry fancy-stall girls who have never been ladies and never will be. Is a man less likely to marry such a girl because he finds she is a lady?"

"Flora, you're a genius!" exclaimed Clarence in his admiration.

"But you don't love me the less, dear, because I was clever and—enterprising?"

"No, dear, I love you the more."

And then he kissed her again, and they lived happily together ever afterwards.

A CHERRY-BUD IN A FOREIGN HAND

A JAPANESE LOVE-STORY

By *Adachi Kinnosuké*

Author of "Iroka: Tales of Japan," etc.



I.

WESTWARD from the Cascade of Nunobiki, through the ever-shifting tracery-work of pines and wild azaleas, you can see, if you would climb a quarter of a mile, on a spring day, a stretch of land that looks more like a dream than the actual solid footstool of God. Behind you the city of Kobé fumes, roars, kicks up dirt and filth in the eyes of the good-natured sun and smears his bright face. From the height you could also spy a straw-thatched cottage buried in the yellow of the rape.

That was her home; there we saw her. Her environment was common—her dress, her cottage, the people about her,—yes, the people especially. But all these common things, because of her, seemed to me as if I saw them on the canvas of Millet or Rembrandt. She was a part of the landscape, and if we say of the ensemble that it is just like a picture, I do not know whether the Higher Artist would take it as a compliment or not.

Describe her? Better ask me to petrify a dream. Her lips? Oh!—one folds his hands on his left side when he speaks of them. Her eyes? Ah, well!

Not satisfied with her success in this, her fair masterpiece, Nature placed her in the rustic surrounding to heighten all the charms of the girl through the touch of that potent magician called surprise. Yes, candidly, I was surprised, and so was Mr. Sidney White, who was with me. Mr. White is an American who has spent more years of his life in Paris and abroad than under the roof of his mother. He was an artist,—an artist who, as he confided to me once, was trying his best to fall as much in love with a woman as he was with Art. Take my word for it, he had that something that goes into the making of a true artist, that all-absorbing something which made him by turns a fool and a god; he had that idolatrous adoration for the beautiful; that contempt of everything common. In order to picture his meet-

ing with the girl, you must fancy an artist facing Art made flesh and beating in a woman's heart. In addition to this, you must take into account that poignant sense of surprise as keen as that of a man who finds a diamond in the dirt.

II.

O TOME was her name. O Tome became an object of study to Sidney. Then, a short time afterwards, the object of study—not only artistic but also— From the very start O Tome was a thing of beauty to him, and in the course of time a joy forever as well. When, therefore, about a month afterwards I went up to his studio I was not surprised to see it converted into a huge multifaced mirror of O Tome—every pose of her figure, every expression of her features, the innumerable blendings of her many moods, were caught in all the conceivable cunning of colors.

"Am I really as pretty as that, White-san?"

"Very, very much more beautiful, mademoiselle!"

"And my hair—and oh, but my eyes, are they softly dreaming as they are yonder?"

"That? Why, that is nothing but a shadow; that is nothing but a picture, like a picture on a temple wall,—a picture of a goddess, you know. One can look at a picture, not the goddess—the original is too dazzling!"

O Tome, who was not sure whether she understood this poetic ambiguity of the artist, smiled as if to say, "The best thing I can do for you is to pretend that I believe all that you say."

"But really, White-san, does your humble maid please her master, then?"

"Hush, sweet one; you should rather say that your slave worships his ideal."

They laughed at each other, and the cherry-blossoms were blushing outside.

III.

"WHAT do you think I have found now, old man?" he asked me one day as he burst into my den. Dropping my brush at the suddenness of his entry and interrogation, I answered: "Hello! you? Why, I have not the slightest idea."

"Well, she is not only a beautiful study, but she is as bright as a Buddha's eyes—I mean her mind. You ought to come and see her."

Yes, I found out that she had learned many an English word.

"Say the first sentence I taught you for us, O Tome-san," White said in Japanese.

Then the olive velvet of her cheeks became a warmer color, and a smile made her lips blossom like an opening bud. Then slowly she said,—

"I—love—you,—Sidney."

The last syllable was lost in the merry ring of her laughter.

I saw him often teaching her English and French. In those happy hours he looked like a male mother mad with ecstasy over the first faltering words of his baby. He was very proud of her; and day by day she rewarded him with the discovery of the hidden treasures of her simple heart.

Twice winter chained water; twice spring set it free and gave it songs; twice chrysanthemums decked their little garden; and they fanned away two summers. They were too much in love to think of marriage—if that were possible.

Those were happy days for him—for her.

IV.

THEN there came a little piece of paper into that studio—to that nest, to speak more correctly, of Art and a couple of spring buds. Upon that paper was a message that came from the other side of the world. Since the receipt of it Sidney White was never the same man. And poor O Tome only wondered. It was rude, to her Japanese way of thinking, to ask many things of a man, and then, if he loved her, he would tell her all she ought to know without her ever asking. So she was silent—sad, because he was sad.

"Come with me, O Tome-san," he said to her one morning.

"Where are we going?"

"I have found a nest for you. And I want you to see if you like it or not."

And they walked up the hill side of Kobé City.

"You see, sweetheart," he explained to her, "I have always thought that you would like to have a cottage all your own. And I think I've found it. We'll furnish it as you like, and there you can do whatever you want. I will come and see you there very often, and we won't be bothered with people who come to my studio; for I am going to keep my studio as it is."

They saw the cottage, whose veranda laughed full-mouthed towards the entrance of the famous inland Sea of Japan.

O Tome was delighted with it. It was arranged that everything would be put in order within a week, and at the end of that time O Tome was to move into it.

"But why don't you move your studio too? I miss the pictures so much," she said to him.

"Oh sweetheart, you will have all the pictures you want. You see, I don't want any of my studio friends bothering us at the cottage."

It was about seventeen days since Sidney White received a cable-

gram stating that his parents would bring out his wife with them to join him in Japan, where he seemed to be making such a prolonged study. Sidney expected them seven days ahead. O Tome was to move to her new cottage four days hence.

She could speak English fluently now, and nothing charmed the artist as the honey-words from her lips.

Her head nestling in his breast, her left arm around his neck, and the fingers of her right hand going astray in the maze of his hair, making the long, wavy locks ripple like the golden surface of a sunlit sea, she was murmuring,—

"Dear, you have such pretty hair; it's like the halos of saints you paint."

There was the sound of many steps in the hall. The housemaid never allowed anyone to enter the studio without seeing if the artist were ready to receive a visitor. But this time the steps came steadily towards the door of the studio. Just as O Tome leaped off the lap of Sidney the door flew open.

There was a vigorous swish of a skirt.

"Sidney!" exclaimed a stronger voice than the dreamy melody of O Tome's throat. And he was lost behind the flutter and whirl of foreign millinery. A resounding kiss.

"Great Heaven, Kate!" gasped a husky voice.

"A surprise-party, my boy!" shouted his father in the door-way. "We did surprise you!—ha! ha! ha!"

Mrs. White released him at last. She turned round to signal the old people to follow her example. The slim figure of O Tome stopped her eyes. At once they flashed back at Sidney and found him ashy, all in a tremor. Something hard entered the blue of her laughing eyes.

"Pray, who is that, Sidney?" Her voice sounded like the breaking of an icicle.

Sidney was a human flame in an instant. He stammered.

"Husband, for Heaven's sake——" cried the lady, and then, turning to O Tome roughly, "Who are you?"

"I am just his model, madam," she said quietly in English with her head down. "Mr. White wanted to paint me."

She walked out noiselessly.

That was the last time Sidney White saw O Tome. Yes, he is hunting for her now—ever hunting. But I think he would find an insane asylum long before he would O Tome.

THE LAST SONATA

By Clinton Dangerfield



HARKNESS was gloomily reckoning the length of time we had spent in Coyote Cañon in our unsuccessful search for gold. Our stay had been so long that we had ceased to number it by days or even weeks. To the left of our little camp, Beilstein, our moon-faced German partner, was getting the usual supper of fried salt pork and flapjacks, muttering dreamily to himself as he pottered around the fire.

Presently Harkness swore a vicious oath.

"We may as well give it up," he said in a hard voice. "And a nice fix we'll be in!—every cent gone and no chance to raise a copper! Beilstein, that yellow-haired frau you talk so much about will never see the shine of *your* money."

Beilstein paused, heedless of the fact that the frying-pan he had just taken from the coals was sending little spurts of grease all over him.

"I know well where to find gold," he said slowly,—“gold for Nina and for all of us,—but I was willing to wait.”

"Shut up!" retorted Harkness uncivilly. "I've heard that rot before."

Supper over, we rolled ourselves in our blankets, too tired to talk, and went promptly to sleep. Not even the cups of bitter coffee, which we swallowed nightly, had any effect on us. To-night I fancied my lids were unusually heavy.

I slept hard, and when I felt a hand on my shoulder I deeply resented the fact that it must be morning, but Beilstein gave me such a shake that my lids at last flew wide open.

"Mein Gott!" said the German, "but you was hard to arouse! I would not have you sleep through it."

"Sleep through what?" I asked. "The devil!"—for I became suddenly aware that I was bound, and that Harkness, tied hand and foot, was snarling and scratching like a cat in his efforts to get loose.

"I was obliged to do it," explained Beilstein calmly. "I feared you would neider understand,—and my plan is so goot—a sure plan. For one time I think I put too much laudanum in your coffee; but see—Harkness can still so beautifully swear!"

A brilliant fire flamed near the tent and lighted up the cañon for hundreds of feet. Beilstein must have spent half the night collecting the wood. It was now perhaps one o'clock.

"Will you explain this tomfoolery?" yelled Harkness. "You certainly can't propose to rob this camp! A flea couldn't find money enough in it to support him a week. Now what"—in six double blanks—"are you after?"

"Do you think I would rob?" said Beilstein proudly. "Rather it is I who will give!"

He dived into the box where we kept our few effects and produced his well-worn Bible, seating himself near his helpless partners.

"Listen," he said triumphantly. "'And a river went out of Eden (we know that in Heaven lies) to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, . . . into four heads. The name of the first is Pison, . . . where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good.'" He looked up.

"What's that got to do with us?" I cried. "See here, Beilstein, if you don't loose me——"

Beilstein turned his pages again. "'And the gates were twelve pearls,'" he proceeded. "'Every several gate was one pearl, and the streets of the city were pure gold.' Now, can you not so plainly see?"

"No," we chorussed, "we can't! Let us up, and go preach your confounded sermons to the wildcats!"

"Then must I more carefully make it clear," said Beilstein firmly. "For many weary months have we here toiled, but the resources of this all-wearied planet are exhausted. We have only one chance—we shall to the next sphere ascend. To yourself fancy," he added with a fatuous expression that told the whole sickening tale, "how easy in Jerusalem to take with our picks a few thousand ounces of gold from the streets."

We were in the hands of a madman; exposure, want, and hope deferred had wrought too hardly on poor Beilstein. I saw that Harkness also understood our position.

In vain we begged, threatened, and cajoled. Beilstein brought out a large keg of powder, and I turned sick with horror as I saw him deliberately lay a fuse to it. He looked meditatively at us.

"You have both my dear violin so enjoyed that I shall one last sonata play for us before we together ascend. I will the fuse light, and when it ends—so shall the sonata end."

Higher and higher flared the bonfire, its rays dancing on the gray cañon walls, on two white-faced men lying bound, and on the German, who, with uplifted eyes, was playing with more than a master's touch. How the weird minor strain of the sonata sobbed and wailed, goblin voices from each rocky crevice seeming to repeat it, while at our feet the fuse hissed faintly and crept like a snake towards the waiting powder.

I had grown so paralyzed with terror that I was utterly incapable of doing more than watch the tiny flame as it moved on; but finally I became aware that we had yet a chance for our lives, though a desperate one.

Never more clear-headed than in moments of great danger, Harkness had waited until Beilstein was completely absorbed in his music, and was now rolling, with the cunning and stealth of an Indian, towards the edge of the tent. I comprehended the prize before him—a loaded revolver had dropped from its holster and lay on the ground near a tent-peg.

Sweeter, clearer, and wilder grew the strains of the violin. A flame of ecstasy burned on Beilstein's face. Farther and farther along the fuse crawled the fire.

It was scant six inches away when the bars of the sonata were broken by a report that was magnified by the cañon. For an instant Beilstein only drew himself more erect; the strong chords leaped headlong from the quivering strings.

I thought Harkness's bound hands had failed him; then Beilstein sprang up, staggered, and fell full length across the fuse. His warm body killed the little fire that had meant so frightful a death!

It was a slight matter for us to extricate ourselves, and the next day we buried him under the shadow of the Rockies. He sleeps there peacefully enough, but somewhere a yellow-haired frau waits in vain for Beilstein and his gold.



THE BLUEBIRD

BY MADISON CAWEIN

FROM morn till noon upon the window-pane
 The tempest tapped with rainy finger-nails,
 And all the afternoon the boisterous gales
 Beat at the door with furious feet of rain.
 The rose,—near which the fleur-de-lis lay slain,—
 Like some red wound dripped by the garden rails,
 On which the sullen slug left silvery trails—
 Meseemed the sun would never shine again.
 Then in the drench, long, loud, and full of cheer,—
 A skyey herald tabarded in blue,—
 A bluebird bugled . . . and at once a bow
 Was bent in heaven; and I seemed to hear
 God's sapphire spaces crystallizing through
 The strataed clouds in azure tremolo.

THE SPORT OF THE GODS

BY

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

AUTHOR OF "THE UNCALLED,"
"THE LOVE OF LANDRY," ETC.

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